

THE POETICAL WORKS
OF
ELIZABETH BARRETT
BROWNING

WITH INTRODUCTION
BY
ALICE MEYNELL

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ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

"HER glories shall never fade." Elizabeth Barrett Browning's fruitful genius, her passion for good, her abundance, her nobility, her tenderness, and the strength that was in her impetuous wishes; her sex, her story, her marriage, her public spirit, and her English love of Italy;—all together have made her name perpetual. And as to the quality of those who remember her, the character of the company her memory keeps, the kind of society her fame frequents, no one could wish her a world of readers of her poetry fitter for the woman than is that world which actually does value her labours. It is a world incorrupt, all of affections, devoted to truth, and in love—whatever "liberty" may mean—with liberty. None can be constant readers of Mrs. Browning without loyalty of heart, or without sympathy; or without holding steadfastly the inner doctrine of self-sacrifice. None who, in the modern world, have taken the tremendous step of denying that doctrine and of refusing it—an act of the soul that is momentous, and yet taken with small deliberation—will be attached to her poetry or patient with it. Her readers, too, are lovers of art, the more intelligent as they do not stop to divide the art from the substance, as do those who follow the fashion to separate a building from its architecture.

Whatever may ultimately become of the rather belated romance—costume pieces and armour pieces—which Mrs. Browning made the subject of a group of her once most popular poems—the poems themselves must long remain fresh because of the humanity with which the author stuffed out those clothes. A knight, a page, the paynims, or a lady and her rival knights, a castle, and a charger—these were not heartless material with her. Not in the sonnets of her own life, nor in the poems on Italy, the emotion of which in a sense cost her life, nor in the spiritual songs of her abundant faith and devotion, is there more vivid or more true feeling than in these imitation romances. Heart and a moral—both alive—are in them all. She seems to have taken a real pleasure in the chivalry and the armour, the pleasure fostered by the times in which she lived. As we too think of anything inaccessible, gloriously coloured and impossible—something remote and Asiatic, for instance, only that Asia is now ransacked like the rest—so a poetess of 1840 thought of the days when men and women were picturesque. A mid-19th-century woman could hardly help but practise the deplorable humility "of not aspiring to be fair," or of not aspiring to be pictorial. Her house, her dress, her street, sepa-

rated her from simplicity and from splendour of living ; and, if she was a writer, she wrote of fortunate ladies who were more free, more natural, and more splendid. A very *banal* literature of romance—prose and verse—was the consequence. Mrs. Browning's fancy was inevitably caught, like that of others, by the helm and the hall, the tower and the vesper bell, the abbess in black and the chatelaine in jewels. She hardly turned the personages of this common drama into very characteristic beings ; but she did make their stories live with her own impassioned spiritual life. Nothing ever made her spirit, her morality, her resolute goodness, flag or falter.

Mrs. Browning's morality was positive. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and her poetry was almost always violent. Her onset carries the day, and we hardly ask whether there was as much power as violence in the rush, or as much grasp as will. It was by means of one of the poems in which her will was most impetuous that she lent a hand in the carrying of an inestimable social reform in England. "The Cry of the Children" was loud as well as strong, even shrill, perhaps ; at any rate it reached all ears ; it had its effect. There are few conceivable human sorrows, losses, or afflictions that would not be overabundantly consoled by the consciousness of having done part of such a work as the manumission of the little slaves of the factories and mines. It is not necessary to claim for Mrs. Browning's poem an influence greater than it may have had. To have done something is so much happiness and success that no one need feign that she did all. Her maternal spirit would be overwhelmed by such great offspring : but if she did not do all to save the young unfortunate, she did much. Even now they are not all saved. Her work is not yet finished, but it is still hers, as far as it is prospering, and will be hers in better times when, by others, it may be better done, because her song will never be forgotten. Among her glories, the glory of this work has become historical. Even those who are so critical as to find the poem somewhat hurried and effusive, admit that nothing that was merely excited, emotional, or hysterical could be so touching. And this quality of tenderness is perceptible and quick in all she has written about children, happy and unhappy, living and dead.

If the knight and the lady had fresh and spiritual meaning for her, and were not made vulgar for her zeal and her heart, the over-written subject of little children and the sentimentalised subject of their early death were to her perpetual and unmarred, fresh as nature and inviolate. So is it with the "conventional" landscape, which we may think bad pictures of mountains, waterfalls, and pines had spoilt for our unlucky and belated eyes, but which, in fact and in nature, when we do face them, when we surprise them aloof in their reality, are as far apart from minor art as though man had never opened any exhibitions—as solitary, as ancient, and as original. The grave of a child, or of a poet, as it is, or as Mrs. Browning contemplated it, is restored to poetry and to tears, or rather was never lost to them.

"Her glories shall never fade." This was a poet's conviction of the fresh immortality of the poet he married. Robert Browning, who made this one emphatic prophecy, did not much dabble in written

criticism. Perhaps there is no famous writer who has written less about writing—so far as the public knows. His own poetry would hardly permit explanations, would gain no security by defence, and indeed seems to lose something of its strength of movement when it is divided and dispersed into little rills and streamlets by the care of commentators, and spread out thinly for examination. Browning does not give us the prose of other men's poetry, and he left to Societies the care of giving us the prose of his own. A word of his about poetry is rare and valuable; and it is appropriate to find it, not in prose of his, but in verse.¹ It is appropriate also that he does not pause to give reasons, but uses that simple form of prophecy which is taken into the speech of all great men in their securest moments, as it is also used by the world with very various sound. Poets have the right to be prophets; for if prophecy is cheap when it is done with ease, it costs a prophet's whole authority when it is done with honour.

"Her glories shall never fade," even when that in her poetry shall fade which had more semblance of life than force of life—the faults that came of a too conscious and too emphatic revolt against her time, a too resolute originality. In another age Elizabeth Barrett Browning would not have needed, or have thought she needed, to spend her strength upon a strained attitude. That attitude is so tense at times as to become defiant. The blank verse of "*Aurora Leigh*" is defiant almost throughout, and the phrase has a turn of assertion and of menace. It needs that the reader should keep his own compcurs in order to feel the value, the recollection and deliberation, of the principles of life and art that she served. In her politics she was too rash, indeed, but not in her steadfast eagerness for righteousness and in the continuous impulsiveness of her passion for truth. Such impulses are those of perpetual motion; they are flights like the flight of planets. Here is no flagging and no fall; and the leap of the spirit is not rash enough. None the less are those moments welcome when the author of "*Lady Geraldine's Courtship*" relaxes the rush of her manner and gathers herself into a shape of gravity and ease better befitting the dignity of her feeling. For example, the "*Sea-Mew*" has such a pause of style, and so have some of the "*Sonnets from the Portuguese*," in which is audible the sweetest and much the slowest of her whispers. The sense of hurry, otherwise, is felt somewhat as a waste of the reader's will, if not of hers. It was no waste of her will if only the rush of the style—I had almost said the dash, but no such vulgar suggestion would be just—was natural to her, was really her mood, or her most frequent mood, and not—as already suggested—a thing assumed because the times were dull and the literary manners of the day demure.

It is difficult not to attribute something of this resolute style to the seclusion of the years in the course of which Mrs. Browning's literary habits were formed. Nothing but the secrecy of a dark sick-room and a sofa could give a sensitive woman the strange courage of Elizabeth Barrett's poems. Out of sight she had no fear of the vociferous

¹ "*Balaustion's Adventure*."

though sweet part she took in the world. She was bold in her hiding-place—very bold, for example, as a letter-writer. Some of her correspondents had never seen her face; she smote them with words of emphatic play, rallied them, challenged them, faced them in twenty encounters. There is a certain tone of letter-writing—confident, with emphatically-finished sentences, and a sense of effect, without much cost of wit. Byron seems to have invented it, chiefly for the sake of its results upon the mind of an admiring, respectfully deprecating Tom Moore. With Byron it was a style of bounce. It was never masculine enough to be called swashing, even by Rosalind, and exceedingly gentle women caught the way of it. See, for instance, how Charlotte Brontë wrote to correspondents who did not know her; to those who did, her tone was more wavering, more reluctant, and more natural. That Byron tone then, is the one, much refined, and joined to intellectual matter, which Elizabeth Barrett's letters sound at times. It would be grotesque to liken her to Byron—the most sincere soul to the paltry soul, incapable of valuable sincerity—and there is no possible kinship of spirit. It is a mere manner, common in its day to the mildest spirits, conscious of themselves. It disappeared from Mrs. Browning's letters precisely when she appeared—when she rose from her sofa, stood at a husband's side, received his friends, faced the fact of her fame with her own delicate physique, no longer lurking in that delusive bower which secluded writers—those who are women—are apt to build for themselves out of their fancies as to what they probably seem to be in the mind and thought of the world of their readers. Of all the bowers of women this is the least worthy, the least sweet, the least stable, and the least profitable. It is curious to watch Charlotte Brontë—shy when she was modestly visible—march martially into that sham hiding-place and strut within. A sham hiding-place, because the woman, despite her reason and her self-knowledge, can hardly resist the tempting peril of thinking of herself not as she is but as she thinks she may be conjectured to be by those who perceive her, or guess at her, from what she writes. It is an intricacy of guesses. And she, seeing a strange figure wearing her name and author of her words, feels a change enormously refreshing and relieving. She has known herself all too well for a certain number of years, and here is a new self, and generally a flattered self, almost to believe in. Elizabeth Barrett was evidently too experienced a soul really to let her own simplicity so slip aside, but her letters are not to be read without the perception of an illusion, an illusive Elizabeth, fugitive indeed, but detained by her own hand for a little time within her literary bower.

Throughout the political poems, but most of all in "Casa Guidi Windows," the poet is a little wrought upon by the stimulating consciousness that contemporary political history is not very often an inspiration of a woman's song. She is not calm. The care of public affairs takes, in her verse, a teaching, announcing, denouncing, judicially excited tone, whereas the questions so whirled to an eloquent conclusion are amongst the most difficult of the century, and matter for a deliberate thought more fitly uttered in a dry, daily, hesitating

voice than in rhyme and rhetoric. Mrs. Browning disposes, for example, of the small states in favour of Italian unity; but what would her heart have felt had it indeed been prophetic—had it possessed that sight of the future which it assumed as a very condition of rhetorical verse—and had it perceived the Italy of fifty years ahead, a deciduous nation thronging abroad, over seas, and into modernised towns, defeated, like a helpless rout of autumn leaves hurried by the winds of a national adversity. These people were once—when she inordinately pitied them—the most industrious of European people, agricultural in work and heart, enduring privations that were not bitter, not squalid, and not stunting to mind or muscle. They had their faults, but the prevalent system of land-tenure interwove their interests with the landlord's, so that the egoism of poverty was, as it were, unclosed, unloosed, partaken, and made human; and the tendency to tyrannous overwork was checked by the gay rebukes of Church holidays and the climate. Where peasant-proprietorship existed, a soil that can give ten hay-harvests in a year secured food to all the frugal. But before the Triple Alliance was even a project, the agriculture of Italy was taxed almost to confiscation, in honour of the new "European Power," and since then the limit has been overpassed in honour of the "European Power of the first class." The destruction of the farmers and peasants of Italy is not an act of yesterday. It dates from the events that Mrs. Browning sang in "Casa Guidi Windows." There are now, too, certain phases of life in the Sicilian mines that she did not foretell when she uttered "The Cry of the Children" in England. The mournful sequel to "Casa Guidi Windows" has been acted, not written. The disaster of the corruption of Italy would not be "accepted of song," and no singer will make hymns to it. In the fervour of national movement, sentimental war, grievance, patriotism, indignation, and idea, the Englishwoman who wrote that poem even condescended, in the cause of Italian unity, to introduce into her verse the name of "Pope Joan"—either seriously, and as though the name and personage were historical, and had never been disproved, or else cynically, as though, in the cause of Italian unity, a vulgar myth or two could piously be paltered with. If a lofty allusion to that long-rebuked myth, "Pope Joan," accompanied by indignation—that must, alas! have been either simulated or ignorant—was laxly forgiven to an authoress over-excited by foreign politics, how does it look now that the foreign politics have ended in so much sorry prose, now that the grievance is more than redressed, and the fires are out? It is just worth noting that the good Englishwoman has an impetuous line upon the heroism of "Garibaldi's wife," whereas the wife in question was a wife, but not his. "Casa Guidi Windows" is not only an irresponsible piece of contemporary history, it is also a falsetto outcry, and a stiff and heavy-footed work in versification. *Terza rima* it is not, though at starting you get an impression that it ought to be. It is but an arrangement of stanzas, whereas the linked and continuous *terza rima*, obviously, is designed to make the stanza impossible. Although the *terza rima* flies low and not swiftly, it never alights, until the innovation of a couplet closes two final wings.

In her lovely "Sonnets from the Portuguese," Mrs. Browning is strictly Petrarchan in rhymes though not in pauses—nor, therefore, in construction. And through this narrow pass of difficulty for English language the noble impulse of her thought takes her sweetly, swiftly, and in poetic grace of action. With the higher workmanship goes closer thinking. Every sonnet of the series has a subject fit for it, a thought with a close. As you come to the last line, and the heart of the poem, that has throbbed strongly, subsides, you acquiesce in the last word. It is the last word, for the time. "Her glories shall never fade," and they shall flourish chiefly in these poems, full of pure heart and of intelligence. It does not need to make a very large collection of best sonnets in the language in order to enclose these. None but the smallest would exclude them. Here is no question of preferences in style and manner. In the sonnets the meaning is in full and calm possession, and manner marches under that steady leadership.

Mrs. Browning was one of the few women poets who have done more than pass over the surface of the classics. She was not only well read, but passionately well read, in Greek literature while she was still young; and not only in the poets, dramatists and philosophers of the antique times properly so called, but in the Greek Christian writers—Fathers and Apologists—through whose work she made for herself a peculiar path of study. But the purest and severest examples of the great ages left her unaffected except by admiration. Neither the Greek measure nor the Roman limit put any detaining or moderating touch upon her enterprising mind. To the spur, to the loosened rein, to the lash, to the chirrup, that Pegasus of hers was ready to answer with a bound, but not to the curb. There is no general conclusion to be drawn from this fact of her poetic history; nor need we make more than is reasonable of the ignorance of Keats or the scholarship of Tennyson, in the controversy as to Greek. One thing only is too sure and too obvious to need proof—that in one literature a writer of English poetry or prose must be well and deeply read, and that is English literature. Whatever he may gain, or not gain, from the fifth century before Christ in Greece, he cannot, without disabling loss to his own English, neglect the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries after Christ in England. It is not very evident that Mrs. Browning gave much studious attention to Jeremy Taylor or Hooker, to Campion or Vaughan. She is modern with the modernism of 1840 in romance, of 1860 in sentiment and ethics. It is not that she is always thus demonstrative and excitable; I have already named her quieter and less strained poetry with all admiration; but we cannot read without a conviction that she found her own keenest satisfaction in the other mood, and held as her successes the poems that she seemed to sign with a flourish. And this I am paradoxically constrained to say of a poet distinctively intellectual, for this she is. She does not write without a thought worthy the name. Emotion is always there, but emotion vibrating from the intellect. Not a love-lyric of hers, not a song of romance, not a religious meditation, but is not only governed, but formed, by a thought. This warmest, most cordial, most touched and touching, most moved and moving, of writers—this woman

eminently a woman of feeling—has her place amongst the intellectual poets of our great literature. And even those who most delight in the nothingness of the immortal little sing-songs of Burns and Byron will doubtless confess that the verse of rational man or woman is in a worthier world of poetry.

Mrs. Browning's best art was also her most natural feeling, her most natural thought; and her least conscious diction her most expressive. She needed some more responsible enthusiasm than that which she cherished for the expulsion of the Austrian in order to do her best—such a passion as the Love in the sonnets, and the Devotion in "Cowper's Grave."

ALICE MEYNELL.

A CHRONOLOGY OF MRS. BROWNING

Born at Burn Hall, Durham	March 6th, 1806
" The Battle of Marathon "	1820
" An Essay on Mind "	1826
" Prometheus Bound "	1833
" The Seraphim "	1838
" Poems "	1844
Married Robert Browning	1846
" Sonnets [from the Portuguese] "	1847
Birth of her son	1849
" The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point "	1849
" Casa Guidi Windows "	1851
" Two Poems by E. B. and R. Browning "	1854
" Aurora Leigh "	1857
" Poems before Congress "	1860
Died at Florence	June 30th, 1861
Last Poems	1862
" The Greek Christian Poems "	1863
" Letters of E. B. Browning." Two vols.	1877

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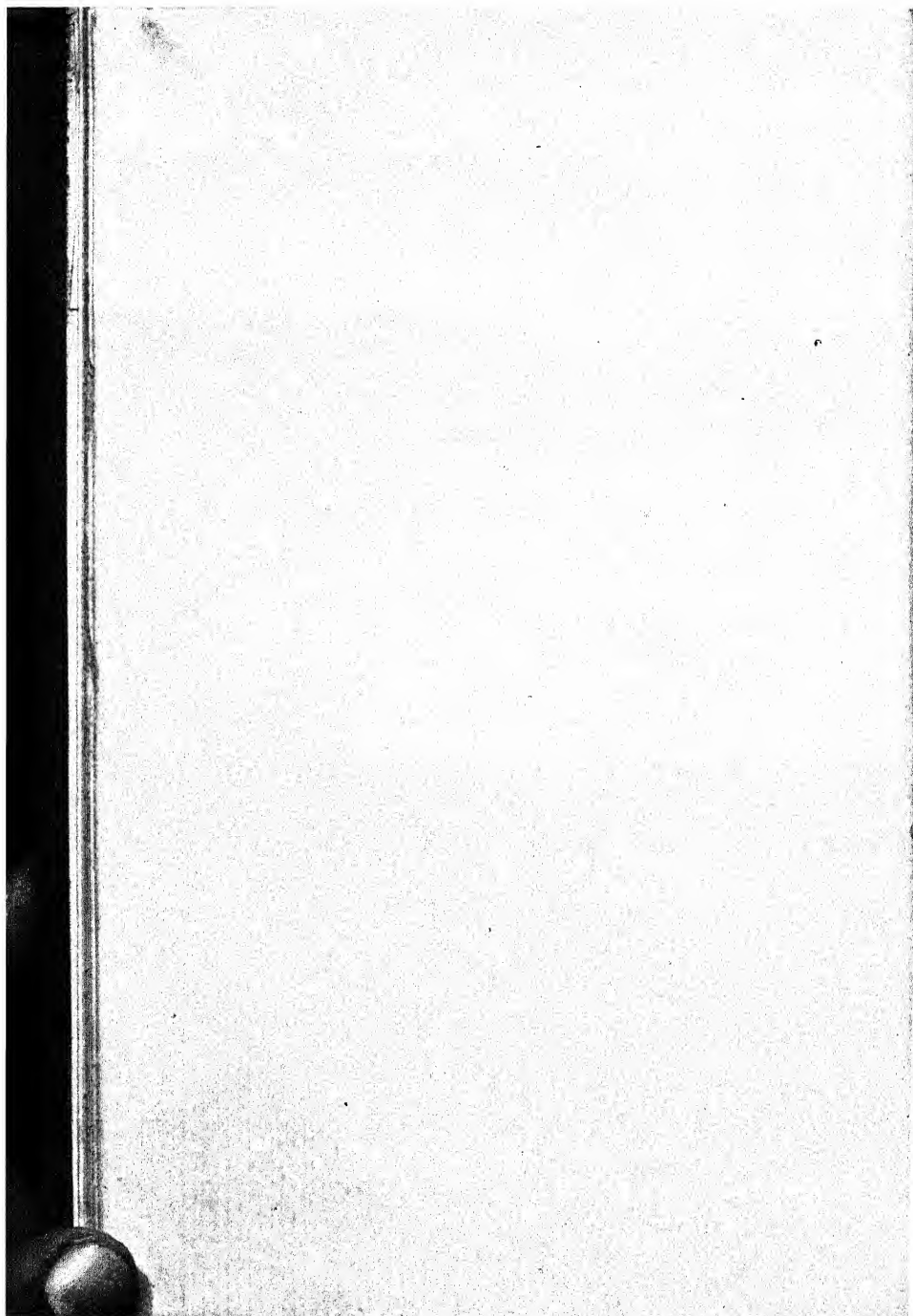
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MRS. BROWNING'S POEMS

AN ESSAY ON MIND

WITH OTHER POEMS

1826.

"Brama assai, poco spera, e nulla chiede."
—*Tasso*.

PREFACE

IN offering this little Volume to the world, it is not my intention to trespass long on its indulgence, "with prefaces, and passages, and excusations." As, however, preface-writing strangely reminds one of Bottom's prologuizing device, which so ingeniously sheweth the "disfiguration of moonshine," and how lion was no lion after all, but plain "Snug the joiner," I will treat the subject according to my great prototype; declaring to those readers who "cannot abide lions," that their "parlous fear" is here unnecessary, and assuring the public that "moonshine" shall be introduced as seldom as is consistent with modern composition.

But something more is necessary; and since writers commonly make use of their prefaces as opportunities for auricular confession to the absolving reader, I am prepared to acknowledge, with unfeigned humility, that the imputation of presumption is likely to be attached to me, on account of the form and title of this production. And yet, to imagine that a confidence in our powers is undeviatingly shewn by our selection of an extensive field for their exertion, is an error; for the subject supports the writer, as much as it is supported by him. It is not difficult to draw a succession of affecting images from objects intrinsically affecting; and ideas arising from an elevated subject are naturally elevated. As Tacitus hath it, "*materia aluntur*." Thought catches the light reflected from the object of her contemplation, and, "expanded by the genius of the spot," loses much of her material

grossness; unless indeed, like Thales, she fall into the water while looking at the stars.

"Ethical poetry," says that immortal writer we have lost, "is the highest of all poetry, as the highest of all earthly objects must be moral truth." I am nevertheless aware how often it has been asserted that poetry is not a proper vehicle for abstract ideas—how far the assertion may be correct, is with me a matter of doubt. We do not deem the imaginative incompatible with the philosophic, for the name of Bacon is on our lips; then why should we expel the argumentative from the limits of the poetic? If indeed we consider Poetry as Plato considered her, when he banished her from his republic; or as Newton, when he termed her "a kind of ingenious nonsense;" or as Locke, when he pronounced that "gaming and poetry went usually together;" or as Boileau, when he boasted of being acquainted with two arts equally useful to mankind—"writing verses, and playing at skittles,"—we shall find no difficulty in assenting to this opinion. But while we behold in poetry, the inspirings to political feeling, the "*monumentum aere perennius*" of buried nations, we are loth to believe her unequal to the higher walks of intellect: when we behold the works of the great though erring Lucretius, the sublime Dante, the reasoning Pope—when we hear Quintilian acknowledge the submission due from Philosophers to Poets, and Gibbon declare Homer to be "the lawgiver, the theologian, the historian, and the philosopher of the ancients," we are *unable* to believe it. Poetry is the enthusiasm of the understanding;

and, as Milton finely expresses it, there is "a high reason in her fancies."

As, according to the plan of my work, I have dwelt less on the operations of the mind than on their effects, so I have not touched on that point difficult to argue, and impossible to determine—the nature of her substance. The investigation is curious, and the subject a glorious one; but, after all, our closest reasonings thereupon are acquired from analogy, and our most extensive views must be content to take their places among other ingenious speculations. The columns of Hercules are yet unpassed. Metaphysicians have cavilled and confuted; but they have failed in their endeavour to establish any permanent theoretical edifice on that windy site. The effort was vainly made even by our enlightened Locke; and, as in the days of Socratic disputation, it is still given to the learned to ask, though not to answer, 'τί δὲ ἡ ψυχή.' Perhaps, however, the following sensible acknowledgment would better become their human lips, than the most artfully constructed hypothesis—The things we understand are so excellent, that we believe what we do not understand to be likewise excellent.¹

The effects of mental operation, or productions of the mind, I have divided into two classes—the philosophical, and the poetical; the former of which I have subdivided into three divisions—History, Physics, and Metaphysics: History, or the doctrine of man, as an active and social being; Physics, or the doctrine of efficient causes; Metaphysics, or the doctrine of abstractions, and final causes. Lord Bacon's comprehensive discernment of the whole, and Locke's acute penetration into parts, have assisted me in my trembling endeavour to trace the outline of these branches of knowledge. To have considered them methodically,

¹ I here adopt, with some little variation, an expression which fell from Socrates, as the subject of a work by Heraclitus the obscure.

and in detail, would have greatly exceeded both the limits of my volume, and, what is more material, the extent of my information: but if I may be allowed to hope that

"The lines, though touch'd thus faintly, are drawn right,"

I shall have nothing left to wish.

Poetry is treated in as cursory a manner as Philosophy, though not precisely for the same reasons. I have been deterred from a further development of her nature and principles, by observing that no single subject has employed the didactic pen with such frequent success, and by a consequent unwillingness to incur a charge of tediousness, when repeating what is well known, or one of presumption, when intruding new-fangled maxims in the place of those deservedly established. The act of white-washing an ancient Gothic edifice would be less indicative of bad taste than the latter attempt. Since the time of Horace, many excellent didactic writers have formed poetic systems from detached passages of that unsystematic work, his "Ars Poetica." Pope, and Boileau, in their Essays on Poetry and Criticism have with superior method traced his footsteps. And yet, "haud passibus aequis"—it is only justice to observe, that though the poem has been excelled, the Poet remains unequalled. For the merits of his imitators are, except in arrangement, Horace's merits, while the merits of Horace are his own.²

I wish that the sublime circuit of intellect, embraced by the plan of my Poem, had fallen to the lot of a spirit more powerful than mine. I wish it had fallen to the lot of one familiar with the dwelling-place of Mind, who could search her secret chambers, and call forth those that sleep; or of one who could enter into her temples, and cast out the iniquitous who buy and sell, profaning the sanctuary of God; or of one who could try the

² He is indebted to Aristotle, which however cannot be said to affect his poetical originality.

golden links of that chain which hangs from Heaven to earth, and shew that it is not placed there for man to covet for lucre's sake, or for him to weigh his puny strength at one end against Omnipotence at the other; but that it is placed there to join, in mysterious union, the natural and the spiritual, the mortal and the eternal, the creature and the Creator. I wish the subject of my Poem had fallen into such hands, that the powers of the execution might have equalled the vastness of the design—and the Public will wish so too. But as it is—though I desire this field to be more meritoriously occupied by others—I would mitigate the voice of censure for myself. I would endeavour to shew, that while I may have often erred, I have not clung willingly to error; and that while I may have failed in representing, I have never ceased to love Truth. If there be much to condemn in the following pages, let my narrow capacity, as opposed to the infinite object it would embrace, be generously considered; if there be any thing to approve, I am ready to acknowledge the assistance which my illustrations have received from the exalting nature of their subject—as the waters of Halys acquire a peculiar taste from the soil over which they flow.

AN ESSAY ON MIND.

"My narrow leaves cannot in them containe
The large discourse."—*Spenser*.

ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST BOOK.

THE poem commences by remarking the desire, natural to the mind, of investigating its own qualities—qualities the more exalted, as their development has seldom been impeded by external circumstances—The various dispositions of different minds are next considered, and are compared to the varieties of scenic nature; inequalities in the spiritual not being more wonderful than inequalities in the natural—Byron and Campbell contrasted—The varieties of genius having been thus treated, the art of

criticism is briefly alluded to, as generally independent of genius, but always useful to its productions—Jeffrey—The various stages of life in which genius appears, and the different causes by which its influence is discovered—Cowley, Alfieri—Allusion to the story of the emotion of Thucydides on hearing Herodotus recite his History at the Olympic Games—The elements of Mind are thus arranged, Invention, Judgment, Memory, and Association—The creations of mind are next noticed, among which we first behold Philosophy—History, Science, and Metaphysics are included in the studies of Philosophy.

Of History, it is observed, that though on a cursory view her task of recalling the past may appear of little avail, it is in reality one of the highest importance—The living are sent for a lesson to the grave—The present state of Rome alluded to; and the future state of England anticipated—Condemnation of those who deprive historical facts of their moral inference, and only make use of their basis to render falsehood more secure—Gibbon—Condemnation of those who would colour the political conduct of past ages with their own political feelings—Hume, Mitford—From the writers, we turn to the readers of history—Their extreme scepticism, or credulity—They are recommended to be guided by no faction; but to measure facts by their consistency with reason—to study the personal character and circumstances of an historian, before they give entire credit to his representations—The influence of private feeling and prejudice—Miller—Science is introduced—Apostrophe to man—Episode of Archimedes—Parallel between history and science—The pride of the latter considered most excessive—The risk attending knowledge—Buffon, Leibnitz—The advantageous experience to be derived from the errors of others, illustrated by an allusion to Southey's Hexameters—Utility the object of science—An exclusive attention to parts depre-

cated, since it is impossible even to have a just idea of PARTS, without acquiring a knowledge of their relative situation in the whole—The extreme difficulty of enlarging the contemplations of a mind long accustomed to contracted views—The scale of knowledge—every science being linked with the one preceding and succeeding—giving and receiving reciprocal support—Why this system is not calculated, as might be conjectured, either to render scientific men superficial, or to intrude on the operations of genius—That the danger of knowledge originates in PARTIAL knowledge—Apostrophe to Newton.

BOOK I.

SINCE Spirit first inspir'd, pervaded
all,
And Mind met Matter, at th' Eternal
call—
Since dust weigh'd Genius down, or
Genius gave
Th' immortal halo to the mortal's
grave;
Th' ambitious soul her essence hath
defin'd,
And Mind hath eulogiz'd the pow'rs of
Mind.
Ere Revelation's holy light began
To strengthen Nature, and illumine
Man—
When Genius, on Icarian pinions,
flew,
And Nature's pencil, Nature's por-
trait, drew;
When Reason shudder'd at her own
wan beam,
And Hope turn'd pale beneath the
sickly gleam—
Evn then hath Mind's triumphant
influence spoke.
Dust own'd the spell, and Plato's
spirit woke—
Spread her eternal wings, and rose
sublime
Beyond th' expanse of circumstance
and time:
Blinded, but free, with faith instinc-
tive, soar'd
And found her home, where prostrate
saunts ador'd!

Thou thing of light! that warm'st the
breasts of men,
Breath'st from the lips, and tremblest
from the pen!
Thou, form'd at once t' astonish, fire,
beguile,—
With Bacon reason, and with Shake-
speare smile!
The subtle cause, ethereal essence!
say,
Why dust rules dust, and clay sur-
passes clay;
Why a like mass of atoms should
combine
To form a Tully, and a Catiline?
Or why, with flesh perchance of equal
weight,
One cheers a prize-fight, and one
frees a state?
Why do not I the muse of Homer call,
Or why, indeed, did Homer sing at
all?
Why wrote not Blackstone upon
love's delusion,
Or Moore, a libel on the Constitu-
tion?
Why must the faithful page refuse to
tell
That Dante, Laura sang, and Pet-
rarch, Hell—
That Tom Paine argued in the
throne's defence—
That Byron nonsense wrote, and
Thurlow sense—
That Southey sigh'd with all a
patriot's cares,
While Locke gave utterance to Hexa-
meters?
Thou thing of light! instruct my pen
to find
Th' unequal pow'rs, the various forms
of Mind!
O'er Nature's changeful face direct
your sight;
View light meet shade, and shade
dissolve in light!
Mark, from the plain, the cloud-
capp'd mountain soar;
The sullen ocean spurn the desert
shore!
Behold, afar, the playmate of the
storm,
Wild Niagara lifts his awful form—
Spits his black foam above the mad-
d'ning floods,

Himself the savage of his native
woods—

See him, in air, his smoking torrents
wheel,

While the rocks totter, and the forests
reel—

Then, giddy, turn ! lo ! Shakespeare's
Avon flows,

Charm'd, by the green-sward's kiss,
to soft repose ;

With tranquil brow reflects the smile
of fame,

And, 'midst her sedges, sighs her
Poet's name.

Thus, in bright sunshine, and alter-
nate storms,

Is various mind express'd in various
forms.

In equal men, why burns not equal
fire ?

Why are not valleys hills,—or moun-
tains higher ?

Her destin'd way, hath destin'd
Nature trod ;

While Matter, Spirit rules, and Spirit,
God.

Let outward scenes, for inward sense
design'd,

Call back our wand'rings to the world
of Mind !

Where Reason, o'er her vasty realms,
may stand,

Convene proud thoughts, and stretch
her scepter'd hand.

Here, classic recollections breathe
around ;

Here, living Glory consecrates the
ground ;

And here, Mortality's deep waters
span

The shores of Genius, and the paths
of Man !

O'er this imagin'd land, your soul
direct—

Mark Byron, the Mont Blanc of
intellect,

'Twixt earth and heav'n exalt his
brow sublime,

O'erlook the nations, and shake hands
with Time !

Stretch'd at his feet do Nature's
beauties throng,

The flow'rs of love, the gentleness of
song ;

Above, the Avalanche's thunder
speaks,

While Terror's spirit walks abroad,
and shrieks !

To some Utopian strand, some fairy
shore,

Shall soft-eyed Fancy waft her Camp-
bell o'er !

Wont, o'er the lyre of Hope, his hand
to fling,

And never waken a discordant string ;
Who ne'er grows awkward by affect-

ing grace,
Or "Common sense confounds with

commonplace ;"

To bright conception, adds expres-
sion chaste,

And human feeling joins to classic
taste.

For still, with magic art, he knows,
and knew,

To touch the heart, and win the judg-
ment too !

Thus, in uncertain radiance, Genius
glows,

And fitful gleams on various mind
bestows :

While Mind, exulting in th' admitted
day,

On various themes, reflects its kind-
ling ray.

Unequal forms receive an equal
light ;

And Klopstock wrote what Kepler
could not write.

Yet Fame hath welcom'd a less noble
few,

And Glory hail'd whom Genius never
knew ;

Art labour'd, Nature's birthright, to
secure,

And forg'd, with cunning hand, her
signature.

The scale of life is link'd by close
degrees ;

Motes float in sunbeams, mites exist
in cheese ;

Critics seize half the fame which bards
receive,—

And Shakespeare suffers that his
friends may live ;

While Bentley leaves, on stilts, the
beaten track,

And peeps at glory from some
ancient's back. (a)

But, though to hold a lantern to the
sun

Be not too wise, and were as well un-
done—

Though, e'en in this inventive age,
alas!

A moral darkness can't be cur'd by
gas—

And, though we may not reasonably
deem

How poets' craniums can be turn'd by
steam—

Yet own we, in our juster reasonings,
That lanterns, gas, and steam, are
useful things—

And oft, this truth, Reflection ponder
o'er—

Bards would write worse, if critics
wrote no more.

Let Jeffrey's praise, our willing pen,
engage,

The letter'd critic of a letter'd age!
Who justly judges, rightfully dis-
cerns,

With wisdom teaches, and with
candour learns.

His name on Scotia's brightest tablet
lives,

And proudly claims the laurel that it
gives.

Eternal Genius! fashion'd like the
sun,

To make all beautiful thou look'st
upon!

Prometheus of our earth! whose
kindling smile

May warm the things of clay a little
while;

Till, by thy touch inspir'd, thine eyes
survey'd,

Thou stoop'st to love the glory thou
hast made;

And weepest, human-like, the mor-
tal's fall,

When, by-and-bye, a breath dis-
perses all.

Eternal Genius! mystic essence! say,
How, on "the chosen breast," de-
scends thy day!

Breaks it at once in Thought's
celestial dream,

While Nature trembles at the sudden
gleam?

Or steals it, gently, like the morning's
light,

Shedding, unmark'd, an influence soft
and bright,

Till all the landscape gather on the
sight?

As different talents, different breasts,
inspire,

So different causes wake the latent
fire.

The gentle Cowley of our native
clime, (b)

Lisp'd his first accents in Aonian
rhyme.

Alfieri's startling muse tun'd not her
strings, (c)

And dumbly look'd "unutterable
things;"

Till, when six lustrums o'er his head
had past,

Conception found expression's voice
at last;

Broke the bright light, uprose the
smother'd flame,—

And Mind and Nature own'd their
poet's fame!

To some the waving woods, the harp
of spring,

A gently-breathing inspiration bring!

Some hear, from Nature's haunts, her
whisper'd call;

And Mind hath triumph'd by an
apple's fall.

Wave Fancy's picturing wand! recall
the scene

Which Mind hath hallow'd—where
her sons have been—

Where, 'midst Olympia's concourse,
simply great,

Th' historic sage, the son of Lyxes,
sate,

Grasping th' immortal scroll—he
breath'd no sound,

But, calm in strength, an instant
look'd around,

And rose—the tone of expectation
rush'd

Through th' eager throng—he spake,
and Greece was hush'd!

See, in that breathless crowd, Olorus
stand, (d)

While one fair boy hangs, list'ning, on
his hand—

The young Thucydides! with upward
brow

Of radiance, and dark eye, that beam-
ing now

Full on the speaker, drinks th' inspir'd
air—

Gazing entranc'd, and turn'd to
marble there!

Yet not to marble—for the wild
emotion

Is kindling on his cheek, like light on
ocean,

Coming to vanish; and his pulses
throb

With transport, and the inarticulate
sob

Swells to his lip—internal nature
leaps

To glorious life, and all th' historian
weeps!

The mighty master mark'd the
favor'd child—

Did Genius linger there? She did,
and smil'd!

Still, on itself, let Mind its eye direct,
To view the elements of intellect—

How wild Invention (daring artist!)
plies

Her magic pencil, and creating dies;
And Judgment, near the living can-

vas, stands,
To blend the colours for her airy

hands;
While Memory waits, with twilight

mists o'er-cast,
To mete the length'ning shadows of

the past:
And bold Association, not untaught,

The links of fact, unites, with links
of thought;

Forming th' electric chains, which,
mystic, bind

Scholastic learning, and reflective
mind.

Let reasoning Truth's unerring glance
survey

The fair creations of the mental ray;
Her holy lips, with just discernment,

teach
The forms, the attributes, the modes

of each;
And tell, in simple words, the narrow

span
That circles intellect, and fetters man;

Where darkling mists, o'er Time's
last footstep, creep,

And Genius drops her languid wing
—to weep.

See first Philosophy's mild spirit, nigh,

Raise the rapt brow, and lift the
thoughtful eye;

Whether the glimmering lamp, that
Hist'ry gave,

Light her enduring steps to some lone
grave;

The while she dreams on him, asleep
beneath,

And conjures mystic thoughts of life
and death—

Whether, on Science' rushing wings,
she sweep

From concave heav'n to earth—and
search the deep;

Shewing the pensile globe attraction's
force,

The tides their mistress, and the stars
their course:

Or whether (task with nobler object
fraught)

She turn the pow'rs of thinking back
on thought—

With mind, delineate mind; and dare
define

The point, where human mingles with
divine:

Majestic still, her solemn form shall
stand,

To shew the beacon on the distant
land—

Of thought, and nature, chronicler
sublime!

The world her lesson, and her teacher
Time!

And when, with half a smile, and half
a sigh,

She lifts old History's faded tapestry,
I' the dwelling of past years—she, aye,

is seen
Point to the shades, where bright-

ning tints had been—

The shapeless forms outworn, and
mildew'd o'er—

And bids us rev'rence what was lov'd
before;

Gives the dank wreath and dusty urn
to fame,

And lends its ashes—all she can—a
name.

Think'st thou, in vain, while pale
Time glides away,

She rakes cold graves, and chronicles
their clay?

Think'st thou, in vain, she counts the
bony things,

Once lov'd as patriots, or obey'd as
kings ?

Lifts she, in vain, the past's mysteri-
ous veil ?

Seest thou no moral in her awful tale ?
Can man, the crumbling pile of nations,
scan,—

And is their mystic language mute for
man ?

Go ! let the tomb its silent lesson give,
And let the dead instruct thee how
to live !

If Tully's page hath bade thy spirit
burn,

And lit the raptur'd cheek—behold
his urn !

If Maro's strains, thy soaring fancy,
guide,

That hail "th' eternal city" in their
pride—(e)

Then turn to mark, in some reflective
hour,

The immortality of mortal pow'r !
See the crush'd column, and the
ruin'd dome—

'Tis all Eternity has left of Rome !
While travell'd crowds, with curious
gaze, repair,

To read the littleness of greatness
there !

Alas ! alas ! so, Albion shall decay,
And all my country's glory pass
away !

So shall she perish, as the mighty
must,

And be Italia's rival—in the dust ;
While her ennobled sons, her cities
fair,

Be dimly thought of 'midst the things
that were !

Alas ! alas ! her fields of pleasant
green,

Her woods of beauty, and each well-
known scene !

Soon, o'er her plains, shall grisly Ruin
haste,

And the gay vale become the silent
waste !

Ah ! soon perchance, our native
tongue forgot—

The land may hear strange words it
knoweth not ;

And the dear accents which our
bosoms move,

With sounds of friendship, or with
tones of love,

May pass away ; or, conn'd on
mould'ring page,

Gleam 'neath the midnight lamp,
for unborn sage ;

To tell our dream-like tale to future
years,

And wake th' historian's smile, and
schoolboy's tears !

Majestic task ! to join, though plac'd
afar,

The things that have been, with the
things that are !

Important trust ! the awful dead, to
scan,

And teach mankind to moralize from
man !

Stupendous charge ! when, on the re-
cord true,

Depend the dead, and hang the living
too !

And, oh ! thrice impious he, who dares
abuse

That solemn charge, and good and ill
confuse !

Thrice guilty he who, false with
" words of sooth ;"

Would pay, to Prejudice, his debt to
Truth ;

The hallow'd page of fleeting Time
profane,

And prove to Man that man has liv'd
in vain ;

Pass the cold grave, with colder jest-
ings, by ;

And use the truth to illustrate a lie !

Let Gibbon's name be trac'd, in sor-
row, here,—

Too great to spurn, too little to re-
vere !

Who follow'd Reason, yet forgot her
laws,

And found all causes, but the " great
first Cause : "

The paths of time, with guideless foot-
steps, trod ;

Blind to the light of nature and of
God ;

Deaf to the voice, amid the past's
dread hour,

Which sounds His praise, and chron-
icles His pow'r !

In vain for *him* was Truth's fair tablet
spread,

When Prejudice, with jaundiced
organs, read.

In vain for *us* the polish'd periods
flow,

The fancy kindles, and the pages
glow ;

When one bright hour, and startling
transport past,

The musing soul must turn—to sigh
at last.

Still let the page be luminous and just,
Nor private feeling war with public
trust ;

Still let the pen from narrowing views
forbear,

And modern faction ancient freedom
spare.

But, ah ! too oft th' historian bends
his mind

To flatter party—not to serve man-
kind ;

To make the dead, in living feuds,
engage,

And give all time, the feelings of his
age.

Great Hume hath stoop'd the
Stuarts' fame t' increase ;

And ultra Mitford soar'd to libel
Greece ! (f)

Yet must the candid muse, impartial,
learn

To trace the errors which her eyes
discern ;

View ev'ry side, investigate each part,
And get the holy scroll of Truth by
heart ;

No blame misplac'd, and yet no fault
forgot—

Like ink employ'd to write with—not
to blot.

Hence, while historians just reproof
incur,

We find some readers, with their
authors, err ;

And soon discover, that as few excel
In reading justly, as in writing well.

For prejudice, or ignorance, is such,
That men believe too little, or too
much ;

Too apt to cavil, or too glad to trust,
With confidence misplac'd, or blame
unjust.

Seek out no faction—no peculiar
school—

But lean on Reason, as your safest
rule. (g)

Let doubtful facts, with patient hand,
be led,

To take their place on this Procrustean
bed !

What, plainly, fits not, may be thrown
aside,

Without the censure of pedantic
pride :

For nature still, to just proportion,
clings ;

And human reason judges natural
things.

Moreover, in th' historian's bosom
look,

And weigh his feelings ere you trust
his book ;

His private friendships, private
wrongs, descry,

Where tend his passions, where his
int'rests lie—

And, while his proper faults your
mind engage,

Discern the ruling foibles of his age.
Hence, when on deep research, the
work you find

A too obtrusive transcript of his
mind ;

When you perceive a fact too highly
wrought,

Which kindly seems to prove a
fav'rite thought ;

Or some opposing truth trac'd briefly
out,

With hand of careless speed—then
turn to doubt !

For private feeling, like the taper,
glows,

And here a light, and there a shadow,
throws.

If some gay picture, vilely daubed,
were seen

With glass of azure, and a sky of
green,

Th' impatient laughter we'd suppress
in vain,

And deem the painter jesting, or in-
sane.

But, when the sun of blinding pre-
judice

Glares in our faces, it deceives our
eyes ;

Truth appears falsehood to the daz-
zled sight,

The comment apes the fact, and black
seems white ;
Commingle hues, their separate
colours lost,
Dance wildly on, in bright confusion
tost ;
And, midst their drunken whirl, the
giddy eye
Beholds one shapeless blot for earth
and sky.
Of such delusions let the mind take
heed,
And learn to think, or wisely cease to
read ;
And, if a style of labour'd grace dis-
play
Perverted feelings, in a pleasing way ;
False tints, on real objects, brightly
laid,
Facts in disguise, and Truth in mas-
querade—
If cheating thoughts in beauteous
dress appear,
With magic sound, to captivate the
ear—
Th' enchanting poison of that page
decline,
Or drink Circean draughts—and turn
to swine !
We hail with British pride, and ready
praise,
Enlightened Miller of our modern
days ! (h)
Too firm though temp'rate, liberal
though exact,
To give too much to argument or fact,
To love details, and draw no moral
thence,
Or seek the comment, and forget the
sense,
He leaves all vulgar aims, and strives
alone
To find the ways of Truth, and make
them known !
Spirit of life ! for aye, with heav'nly
breath,
Warm the dull clay, and cold abodes
of death !
Clasp in its urn the consecrated dust,
And bind a laurel round the broken
bust ;
While 'mid decaying tombs, thy pen-
sive choice,
Thou bid'st the silent utter forth a
voice,

To prompt the actors of our busy
scene,
And tell what *is*, the tale of what *has*
been !

Yet turn, Philosophy ! with brow
sublime,
Shall Science follow on the steps of
Time !

As, o'er Thought's measureless
depths, we bend to hear

The whispered sound, which stole on
Descartes' ear, (i)

Hallowing the sunny visions of his
youth

With that eternal mandate, " Search
for Truth ! "

Yes ! search for Truth—the glorious
path is free ;

Mind shews her dwelling—Nature
holds the key—

Yes ! search for Truth—her tongue
shall bid thee scan

The book of knowledge, for the use
of Man !

Man ! Man ! thou poor antithesis of
power !

Child of all time ! yet creature of an
hour !

By turns, chameleon of a thousand
forms,

The lord of empires, and the food of
worms !

The little conqueror of a petty space,
The more than mighty, or the worse
than base !

Thou ruin'd landmark, in the desert
way,

Betwixt the all of glory, and decay !
Fair beams the torch of Science in
thine hand,

And sheds its brightness o'er the
glimmering land ;

While, in thy native grandeur, bold,
and free,

Thou bid'st the wilds of nature smile
for thee,

And treadest Ocean's paths full
royally !

Earth yields her treasures up—
celestial air

Receives thy globe of life—when,
journeying there,

It bounds from dust, and bends its
course on high,

And walks, in beauty, through the
wondering sky.
And yet, proud clay ! thine empire is
a span,
Nor all thy greatness makes thee
more than man !
While Knowledge, Science, only
serve t' impart
The god thou *would'st* be, and the
thing thou *art* !
Where stands the Syracusan—while
the roar
Of men, and engines, echoes through
the shore ?
Where stands the Syracusan ? hag-
gard Fate,
With ghastly smile, is sitting at the
gate ;
And Death forgets his silence 'midst
the crash
Of rushing ruins—and the torches'
flash
Waves redly on the straggling forms
that die ;
And masterless steeds, beneath that
gleam, dart by,
Scared into madness, by the battle
cry—
And sounds are hurtling in the angry
air,
Of hate, and pain, and vengeance,
and despair—
The smothered voice of babes—the
long wild shriek
Of mothers—and the curse the dying
speak !
Where stands the Syracusan ? tran-
quil sage,
He bends, sublime, o'er Science'
splendid page ;
Walks the high circuit of extended
mind,
Surpasses man, and dreams not of
mankind ;
While, on his listless ear, the battle
shout
Falls senseless—as if echo breath'd
about
The hum of many words, the laughing
glee,
Which linger'd there, when Syracuse
was free.
Away ! away ! for louder accents fall—
But not the sounds of joy from
marble hall !

Quick steps approach—but not of
sylphic feet,
Whose echo heralded a smile more
sweet,
Coming, all sport, th' indulgent sage,
t' upbraid
For lonely hours, to studious musing,
paid—
Be hushed ! Destruction bares the
flickering blade !
He asked to live, th' unfinished lines
to fill,
And died—to solve a problem deeper
still.
He died, the glorious ! who, with
soaring sight, (*j*)
Sought some new world, to plant his
foot of might ;
Thereon, in solitary pride, to stand,
And lift our planet, with a master's
hand !
He sank in death—Creation only gave
That thorn-encumbered space which
forms his grave—
An unknown grave, till Tully chanced
to stray,
And named the spot where Archi-
medes lay !
Genius ! behold the limit of thy
power !
Thou fir'st the soul—but, when life's
dream is o'er,
Giv'st not the silent pulse one throb
the more :
And mighty beings come, and pass
away,
Like other comets, and like other—
clay.
Though analysing Truth must still
divide
Historic state, and scientific pride ;
Yet one stale fact, our judging
thoughts infer—
Since each is human, each is prone
to err !
Oft, in the night of Time, doth His-
tory stray,
And lift her lantern, and proclaim it
day !
And oft, when day's eternal glories
shine,
Doth Science, boasting, cry—"The
light is mine !"
So hard to bear, with unobstructed
sight, (*k*)

Th' excess of darkness, or th' extreme of light.

Yet, to be just, though faults belong to each,

The themes of one, an humbler moral, teach :

And, 'midst th' historian's eloquence, and skill,

The human chronicler is human still.

If on past power, his eager thoughts be cast,

It brings an awful antidote—'tis past !

If, deathless fame, his ravish'd organs scan,

The deathless fame exists for buried man :

Power, and decay, at once he turns to view ;

And, with the strength, beholds the weakness too.

Not so, doth Science' musing son aspire ;

And pierce creation, with his eye of fire.

Yon mystic pilgrims of the starry way,

No humbling lesson, to his soul, convey ;

No tale of change, their changeless course hath taught ;

And works divine excite no earthward thought.

And still, he, reckless, builds the splendid dream ;

And still, his pride increases with his theme ;

And still, the cause is slighted in th' effect ;

And still, self-worship follows self-respect.

Too apt to watch the engines of the scene,

And lose the hand, which moves the vast machine ;

View Matter's form, and not its moving soul ;

Interpret parts, and misconceive the whole :

While, darkly musing 'twixt the earth and sky,

His heart grows narrow, as his hopes grow high ;

And quits, for aye, with unavailing loss,

The sympathies of earth, but not the dross ;

Till Time sweeps down the fabric of his trust ;

And life, and riches, turn to death, and dust.

And such is Man ! 'neath Error's foul assaults,

His noblest moods beget his grossest faults !

When Knowledge lifts her hues of varied grace,

The fair exotic of a brighter place,

To keep her stem, from mundane blasts, enshrin'd,

He makes a fatal hot-bed of his mind ;

Too oft adapted, in their growth, to spoil

The natural beauties of a generous soil.

Ah ! such is Man ! thus strong, and weak withal,

His rise oft renders him too prone to fall !

The loftiest hills' fresh tints the soonest fade ;

And highest buildings cast the deepest shade !

So Buffon err'd ; amidst his chilling dream, (1)

The judgment grew material as the theme :

Musing on Matter, till he called away

The modes of Mind, to form the modes of clay ;

And made, confusing each, with judgment blind,

Mind stoop to dust, and dust ascend to Mind.

So Leibnitz err'd ; when, in the starry hour,

He read no weakness, where was written, " Power ; "

Beheld the verdant earth, the circling sea ;

Nor dreamt so fair a world could cease to be !

Yea ! but he heard the Briton's awful name,

As, scattering darkness, in his might, he came,

Girded with Truth, and earnest to confute

What gave to Matter Mind's best attribute.

Sternly they strove—th' unequal race was run! (*m*)

The owlet met the eagle at the sun!

While such defects, their various forms, unfold;

And rust, so foul, obscures the brightest gold—

Let Science' soaring sons the ballast cast,

But judge their present errors by their past.

As some poor wanderer, in the darkness, goes,

When fitful wind, in hollow murmur, blows;

Hailing, with trembling joy, the lightning's ray,

Which threatens his safety, but illumines his way.

Gross faults buy deep experience. Sages tell

That Truth, like Æsop's fox, is in a well;

And, like the goat his fable prates about,

Fools must stay in, that wise men may get out.

What thousand scribblers, of our age, would choose

To throw a toga round the English muse;

Rending her garb of ease, which graceful grew

From Dryden's loom, beprankt with varied hue!

In that dull aim, by Mind unsanctified,

What thousand Wits would have their wits belied,

Devoted Southey! if thou had'st not tried! (*n*)

Use is the aim of Science; this the end

The wise appreciate, and the good commend.

For not, like babes, the flaming torch, we prize,

That sparkling lustre may attract our eyes;

But that, when evening shades impede the sight,

It casts, on objects round, a useful light.

Use is the aim of Science! give again A golden sentence to the faithful pen—

Dwell not on parts! for parts contract the mind; (*o*)

And knowledge still is useless, when confined.

The yearning soul, enclosed in narrow bound,

May be ingenious, but is ne'er profound:

Spoil'd of its strength, the fettered thought grows tame;

And want of air extinguishes the flame!

And as the sun, beheld in mid-day blaze,

Seems turned to darkness, as we strive to gaze;

So mental vigour, on one object, cast, That object's self becomes obscured at last.

'Tis easy, as Experience may aver, To pass from general to particular,

But most laborious to direct the soul From studying parts, to reason on the whole:

Thoughts, train'd on narrow subjects, to let fall;

And learn the unison of each with all.

In Nature's reign a scale of life we find:

A scale of knowledge we behold in mind;

With each progressive link, our steps ascend,

And traverse all, before they reach the end;

Searching, while Reason's powers may farther go,

The things we know not, by the things we know.

But hold! methinks some sons of Thought demand,

"Why strive to form the Trajan's vase in sand?

Are Reason's paths so few, that Mind may call

Her finite energies, to tread them all? Lo! Learning's waves, in bounded channel, sweep;

When they flow wider, shall they run as deep?

Shall that broad surface, no dull shal-
low, hide,
Growing dank weeds of superficial
pride?

Then Heaven may leave our giant
powers alone;

Nor give each soul a focus of its own!
Genius bestows, in vain, the chosen
page,

If all the tome, the minds of all
engage!"

Nay! I reply—with free congenial
breast,

Let each peruse the part, which
suits him best!

But, lest contracting prejudice mis-
lead,

Regard the context, as he turns to
read!

Hence, liberal feeling gives th' en-
lighten'd soul,

The spirit, with the letter of the
scroll.

With what triumphant joy, what
glad surprise,

The dull behold the dulness of the
wise!

What insect tribes of brainless impu-
dence

Buzz round the carcase of perverted
sense!

What railing idiots hunt, from classic
school,

Each flimsy sage, and scientific
fool,

Crying, "'Tis well! we see the blest
effect

Of watchful night, and toiling intel-
lect!"

Yet let them pause, and tremble—
vainly glad;

For too much learning maketh no
man mad! (p)

Too little dims the sight, and leads
us o'er

The twilight path, where fools have
been before;

With not enough of Reason's radiance
seen,

To track the footsteps, where those
fools have been.

Divinest Newton! if my pen may shew
A name so mighty, in a verse so
low,—

Still let the sons of Science, joyful,
claim

The bright example of that splendid
name!

Still let their lips repeat, my page
bespeak,

The sage how learned! and the man
how meek! (q)

Too wise, to think his human folly
less;

Too great, to doubt his proper little-
ness;

Too strong, to deem his weakness
past away;

Too high in soul, to glory in his clay:
Rich in all nature, but her erring
side:

Endow'd with all of Science—but its
pride.

ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND BOOK

METAPHYSICS—Address to Metaphy-
sicians—The most considerable por-
tion of their errors conceived to arise
from difficulties attending the use of
words—That on one hand, thoughts
become obscure without the assist-
ance of language, while on the other,
language from its material analogy
deteriorates from spiritual meaning—
Allusion to a probable mode of
communication between spirits af-
ter death—That a limited respect,
though not a servile submission, is
due to verbal distinctions—Clearness
of style peculiarly necessary to Meta-
physical subjects—The graces of
Composition not inconsistent with
them—Plato, Bacon, Bolingbroke—
The extremes into which Philoso-
phers have fallen with regard to
sensation, and reflection—Berke-
ley, Condillac—That subject briefly
considered—Abstractions—Longinus,
Burke, Price, Payne Knight—Blind
submission to authorities deprecated
—The Pythagorean saying opposed,
and Cicero's unphilosophical asser-
tion alluded to—That, however, it
partakes of injustice to love Truth,
and yet refuse our homage to the
advocates of Truth—How the names
of great writers become endeared to
us by early recollections—Description
of the School-boy's first intellectual

gratifications—That even without reference to the past, some immortal names are entitled to our veneration, since they are connected with Truth — Bacon — Apostrophe to Locke.

Poetry is introduced—More daring than Philosophy, she personifies abstractions, and brings the things unseen before the eye of the Mind—How often reason is indebted to poetic imagery—Irring—The poetry of prose—Plato's ingratitude—Philosophers and Poets contrasted—An attempt to define Poetry—That the passions make use of her language—Nature the poet's study—Shakespeare—Human nature as seen in cities—Scenic nature, and how the mind is affected thereby—That Poetry exists not in the object contemplated, but is created by the contemplating mind—The ideal—Observations on the structure of verse, as adapted to the subject treated—Milton, Horace, Pope—The French Drama—Corneille, Racine—Harmony and chasteness of versification—The poem proceeds to argue that the muse will refuse her inspiration to a soul unattuned to generous sympathy, unkindled by the deeds of Virtue, or the voice of Freedom—Contemptuous notice of those prompted only by interest to aspire to poetic eminence—What should be the Poet's best guerdon—From the contemplation of motives connected with Freedom, we are led by no unnatural transition to Greece—Her present glorious struggle—Anticipation of her ultimate independence, and the restoration of the Muses to their ancient seats—Allusion to the death of Byron—Reflections on Mortality—The terrors of death as beheld by the light of Nature—The consolations of death as beheld with reference to a future state—Contemplation of the immortality of Mind, and her perfected powers—Conclusion.

BOOK II

But now to higher themes! no more confin'd

To copy Nature, Mind returns to Mind.

We leave the throng, so nobly, and so well,

Tracing, in Wisdom's book, things visible,—

And turn to things unseen; where, greatly wrought,

Soul questions soul, and thought revolves on thought.

My spirit loves, my voice shall hail ye, now,

Sons of the patient eye, and passionless brow!

Students sublime! Earth, man, unmov'd, ye view,

Time, circumstance; for what are they to you?

What is the crash of worlds,—the fall of kings,—

When worlds and monarchs are such brittle things!

What the tost, shatter'd bark, that blindly dares

A sea of storm? Ye sketch the wave which bears!

The cause, and not th' effect, your thoughts exact;

The principle of action, not the act,—The soul! the soul! and, 'midst so

grand a task,

Ye call her rushing passions, and ye ask

Whence are ye? and each mystic thing responds!

I would be all ye are—except those bonds!

Except those bonds! ev'n here is oft descried

The love to parts, the poverty of pride!

Ev'n here, while Mind, in Mind's horizon, springs,

Her "native mud" is weighing on her wings!

Ev'n here, while Truth invites the ardent crowd,

Ixion-like, they rush t' embrace a cloud!

Ev'n here, oh! foul reproach to human wit!

A Hobbes hath reasoned, and Spinoza writ!

Rank pride does much! and yet wo justly cry,

Our greatest errors in our weakness
lie.

For thoughts uncloth'd by language
are, at best,

Obscure ; while grossness injures
those exprest—

Through words,—in whose analysis,
we find

Th' analogies of Matter, not of Mind :

Hence, when the use of words is
graceful brought,

As physical dress to metaphysic
thought,

The thought, howe'er sublime its
pristine state,

Is by th' expression made degenerate ;

Its spiritual essence changed, or
cramp'd ; and hence

Some hold by words, who cannot
hold by sense ;

And leave the thought behind, and
take th' attire—

Elijah's mantle—but without his fire !

Yet spurn not words ! 'tis needful to
confess

They give ideas, a body and a dress !

Behold them traverse Learning's
region round,

The vehicles of thought on wheels of
sound ;

Mind's winged strength, wherewith
the height is won,

Unless she trust their frailty to the
sun.

Destroy the body !—will the spirit
stay ?

Destroy the car !—will Thought
pursue her way ?

Destroy the wings !—let Mind their
aid forego !

Do no Icarian billows yawn below ?

Ah ! spurn not words with reckless
insolence ;

But still admit their influence with
the sense,

And fear to slight their laws ! Per-
chance we find

No perfect code transmitted to
mankind ;

And yet mankind, till life's dark
sands are run,

Prefers imperfect government to
none.

Thus Thought must bend to words !
—Some sphere of bliss,

Ere long, shall free her from th' alloy
of this :

Some kindred home for Mind—some
holy place,

Where spirits look on spirits, " face
to face,"—

Where souls may see, as they them-
selves are seen,

And voiceless intercourse may pass
between,

All pure—all free ! as light, which
doth appear

In its own essence, incorrupt and
clear !

One service, praise ! one age, eternal
youth !

One tongue, intelligence ! one sub-
ject, truth !

Till then, no freedom, Learning's
search affords,

Of soul from body, or of thought
from words.

For thought may lose, in struggling
to be hence,

The gravitating power of Common-
sense ;

Through all the depths of space with
Phaeton hurl'd,

T' impair our reason, as he scorch'd
our world.

Hence, this preceptive truth, my
page affirms—

Respect the technicality of terms !

Yet not in base submission—lest we
find

That, aiding clay, we crouch too low
for Mind ;

Too apt conception's essence to for-
get,

And place all wisdom in the alphabet.

Still let appropriate phrase the sense
invest ;

That what is well conceived be well
exprest !

Nor e'er the reader's wearied brain
engage,

In hunting meaning down the mazy
page,

With three long periods tortured
into one,

The sentence ended, with the sense
begun ;

Nor in details, which schoolboys
know by heart,

Perplex each turning with the terms
of art.
To understand, we deem no common
good ;
And 'tis less easy to be *understood*.
But let not clearness be your only
praise,
When style may charm a thousand
different ways ;
In Plato glow, to life and glory
wrought,
By high companionship with no-
blest thought ;
In Bacon, warm abstraction with a
breath,
Catch Poesy's bright beams, and
smile beneath ;
In St. John roll, a generous stream,
along,
Correctly free and regularly strong.
Nor scornful deem the effort out of
place,
With taste to reason and convince
with grace ;
But ponder wisely, ere you know, too
late,
Contempt of trifles will not prove us
great !
The Cynics, not their tubs, respect
engage ;
And dirty tunic never made a
sage.
E'en Cato—had he own'd the Senate's
will,
And wash'd his toga—had been
Cato still. (a)
Justly we censure—yet are free to
own,
That indecision is a crime unknown.
For, never faltering, seldom reason-
ing long,
And still most positive when'er
most wrong,
No theoretic sage is apt to fare
Like Mah'met's coffin—hung in mid-
dle air !
No ! fenc'd by Error's all-sufficient
trust,
These stalk "in nubibus"—those
crawl in dust.
From their proud height, the first
demand to know,
If spiritual essence should descend
more low ?
The last, as vainly, from their dung-
hill, cry,

B.P.

Can body's grossness hope t' aspire
more high ?
And while Reflection's empire, these
disclose,
Sensation's sovereign right is told
by those.
Lo ! Berkeley proves an old hypothe-
sis !
" Out on the senses ! " (he was out of
his !)
" All is idea ! and nothing real springs
But God, and Reason "—(not the
right of kings ?) (b)
" Hold ! " says Condillac with pro-
found surprise—
" Why prate of Reason ? we have
ears and eyes ! "

Condillac ! while the dangerous peri-
ods fall
Upon thy page, to stamp sensation
all ;
While (coldly studious !) thine ingeni-
ous scroll (c)
Endows the mimic statue with a soul
Compos'd of sense—behold the gener-
ous hound—
His piercing eye, his ear awake to
sound,
His scent, most delicate organ !
and declare
What triumph hath the " Art of
Thinking " there ! (d)
What Gall, or Spurzheim, on his
front hath sought
The mystic bumps indicative of
Thought ?
Or why, if Thought *do* there maintain
her throne,
Will reasoning curs leave logic for a
bone ?

Mind is imprison'd in a lonesome
tower :
Sensation is its window—hence herb,
flower,
Landscapes all sun, the rush of
thousand springs,
Waft in sweet scents, fair sights,
soft murmurings ;
And in her joy, she gazeth—yet ere
long,
Reason awaketh in her, bold and
strong,
And o'er the scene exerting secret
laws,

C

First seeks th' efficient, then the final
cause,
Abstracts from forms their hidden
accidents,
And marks in outward substance,
inward sense.

Our first perceptions formed—we
search, to find

The operations of the forming mind ;
And turn within by Reason's certain
route,

To view the shadows of the things
without

Discern'd, retain'd, compar'd, combin'd,
and brought

To mere abstraction, by abstracting
Thought.

Hence to discern, retain, compare,
connect,

We deem the faculties of Intellect ;
The which, mus'd on, exert a new
controul,

And fresh ideas are open'd on the
soul.

Sensation is a stream with dashing
spray,

That shoots in idle speed its arrowy
way ;

When lo ! the mill arrests its waters'
course,

Turning to use their unproductive
force :

The cunning wheels by foamy currents
sped,

Reflection triumphs,—and mankind
is fed !

Since Pope hath shewn, and Learning
still must shew,

" We cannot reason but from what
we know,"—

Unfold the scroll of Thought ; and
turn to find

The undeceiving signature of Mind !
There, judge her nature by her nature's
course,

And trace her actions upwards to
their source.

So when the property of Mind we call
An essence, or a substance spiritual,
We name her thus, by marking how
she clings

Less to the forms than essences of
things ;

For body clings to body—objects seen

And substance sensible alone have
been

Sensation's study ; while reflective
Mind,

Essence unseen in objects seen may
find ;

And, tracing whence her known
impressions came,

Give single forms an universal name.

So, when particular sounds in concord
rise,

Those sounds as *melody*, we generalize ;

When pleasing shapes and colours
blend, the soul

Abstracts th' idea of *beauty* from the
whole,

Deducting thus, by Mind's enchanting
spell,

The intellectual from the sensible.

Hence bold Longinus' splendid periods
grew,

" Who was himself the great sublime
he drew : "

Hence Burke, the poet-reasoner,
learn'd to trace

His glowing style of energetic grace :

Hence thoughts, perchance, some
favour'd bosoms move,

Which Price might own, and classic
Knight approve !

Go ! light a rushlight, ere the day is
done,

And call its glimm'ring brighter
than the sun !

Go ! while the stars in midnight
glory beam,

Prefer their cold reflection in the
stream !

But be not that dull slave, who only
looks

On Reason, " through the spectacles
of books ! "

Rather by Truth determine what is
true,—

And reasoning works, through Reason's
medium, view ;

For authors can't monopolize her
light :

'Tis yours to read, as well as theirs
to write.

To judge is yours !—then why
submissive call, (e)

" The master said so ? "—"Tis no rule
at all !

Shall passive sufferance e'en to mind
 belong,
 When right divine in man is human
 wrong?
 Shall a high name a low idea enhance,
 When all may fail, as some succeed—
 by chance?
 Shall fix'd chimeras unfix'd reason
 shock?
 And if Locke err, must thousands
 err with Locke?
 Men! claim your charter! spurn
 th' unjust controul,
 And shake the bondage from the
 free-born soul!
 Go walk the porticoes! and teach
 your youth
 All names are bubbles, but the name
 of Truth!
 If fools, by chance, attend to Wis-
 dom's rules,
 'Tis no dishonour to be right with
 fools.
 If human faults to Plato's page be-
 long, (f)
 Not ev'n with Plato, willingly go
 wrong.
 But though the judging page declare
 it well
 To love Truth better than the lips
 which tell;
 Yet 'twere an error, with injustice
 class'd,
 T' adore the former, and neglect the
 last.
 Oh! beats there, Heav'n! a heart of
 human frame,
 Whose pulses throb not at some
 kindling name?
 Some sound, which brings high mus-
 ings in its track,
 Or calls perchance the days of child-
 hood back,
 In its dear echo,—when, without a
 sigh,
 Swift hoop, and bounding ball,
 were first laid by,
 To clasp in joy, from school-room
 tyrant, free,
 The classic volume on the little knee,
 And con sweet sounds of dearest
 minstrelsy,
 Or words of sterner lore; the young
 brow fraught
 With a calm brightness which might
 mimic thought,

Leant on the boyish hand—as, all the
 while,
 A half-heav'd sigh, or aye th' uncon-
 scious smile
 Would tell how, o'er that page, the
 soul was glowing,
 In an internal transport, past the
 knowing!
 How feelings, erst unfelt, did then
 appear,
 Give forth a voice, and murmur,
 "We are here!"
 As lute-strings, which a strong hand
 plays upon;
 Or Memnon's statue singing 'neath
 the sun. (g)
 Ah me! for such are pleasant mem-
 ories—
 And call the tears of fondness to our
 eyes
 Reposing on this gone-by dream—
 when thus,
 One marbled book was all the world
 to us;
 The gentlest bliss our innocent
 thoughts could find—
 The happiest cradle of our infant
 mind!
 And though such hours be past, we
 shall not less
 Think on their joy with grateful
 tenderness;
 And bless the page which bade our
 reason wake,—
 And love the prophet, for his mis-
 sion's sake.
 But not alone doth Memory's smoul-
 dering flame
 Reflect a radiance on a glorious
 name;
 For there are names of pride; and
 they who bear
 Have walked with Truth, and turn'd
 their footsteps where
 We walk not—their beholdings aye
 have been
 O'er Mind's far countries which we
 have not seen—
 Our thoughts are not their thoughts!
 —and oft we dream
 That light upon the awful brow doth
 gleam,
 From that high converse; as when
 Moses trod
 Towards the people, from the mount
 of God,

His lips were silent, but his face was
bright,
And prostrate Israel trembled at the
sight.

What tongue can syllable our Bacon's
name,
Nor own a heart exulting in his fame?
Where prejudice' wild blasts were
wont to blow,
And waves of ignorance roll'd dark
below,
He raised his sail—and left the coast
behind,—
Sublime Columbus of the realms of
Mind!
Dared folly's mists, opinion's treach-
erous sands,
And walk'd, with godlike step, th'
untrodden lands!
But ah! our Muse of Britain, stand-
ing near, (*h*)
Hath dimm'd my tablet with a pen-
sive tear!
Thrice, the proud theme, her free-
born voice essays,—
And thrice that voice is faltering in
his praise—
Yea! till her eyes in silent triumph
turn
To mark afar her Locke's sepulchral
urn!
Oh urn! where students rapturous
vigils keep,
Where sages envy, and where patriots
weep!
Oh Name! that bids my glowing
spirit wake—
To freemen's hearts endeared for
Freedom's sake!
Oh soul! too bright in life's corrupt-
ing hour,
To rise by faction, or to crouch to
power!
While radiant Genius lifts her heav'n-
ward wing,
And human bosoms own the Mind I
sing;
While British writers British thoughts
record,
And England's press is fearless as her
sword;
While, 'mid the seas which gird our
favor'd isle,
She clasps her charter'd rights with
conscious smile;

So long be *thou* her glory, and her
guide,
Thy page her study, and thy name
her pride!
Oh! ever thus, immortal Locke, be-
long
First to my heart, as noblest in my
song;
And since in thee, the muse enrap-
tured find
A moral greatness, and creating
mind,
Still may thine influence, which
with honor'd light
Beams when I read, illumine me as I
write!
The page too guiltless, and the soul
too free,
To call a frown from Truth, or blush
from thee!
But where Philosophy would fear to
soar,
Young Poesy's elastic steps explore!
Her fairy foot, her daring eye pur-
sues
The light of faith—nor trembles as
she views!
Wont o'er the Psalmist's holy harp
to hang,
And swell the sacred note when
Milton sang;
Mingling reflection's chords with
fancy's lays,
The tones of music with the voice of
praise!
And while Philosophy, in spirit, free,
Reasons, believes, yet cannot plainly
see,
Poetic Rapture, to her dazzled sight,
Pours the shadows of the things
of light;
Delighting o'er the unseen worlds to
roam,
And waft the pictures of perfection
home.
Thus Reason oft the aid of fancy
seeks,
And strikes Pierian chords—when
Irving speaks! (*i*)
Oh! silent be the withering tongue of
those
Who call each page, bereft of
measure, prose;
Who deem the Muse possess'd of such
faint spells,

That like poor fools, she glories in her
bells ;

Who hear her voice alone in tinkling
chime,

And find a line's whole magic in its
rhyme ;

Forgetting, if the gilded shrine be fair,
What purer spirit may inhabit there !

For such,—indignant at her ques-
tioned might,

Let Genius cease to charm—and
Scott to write !

Ungrateful Plato ! o'er thy cradled
rest, (*g*)

The Muse hath hung, and all her love
expressed ;

Thy first imperfect accents fondly
taught,

And warm'd thy visions with poetic
thought !

Ungrateful Plato ! should her deadli-
est foe

Be found within the breast she
tended so ?

Spoil'd of her laurels, should she
weep to find

The best below'd become the most
unkind ?

And was it well or generous, Brutus
like,

To pierce the hand that gave the
power to strike ?

Sages, by reason, reason's powers
direct ;

Bards, through the heart, convince
the intellect.

Philosophy majestic brings to view
Mind's perfect modes, and fair pro-
portions too ;

Enchanting Poesy bestows the while,
Upon its sculptured grace, her magic
smile,

Bids the cold form, with living radi-
ance glow,

And stamps existence on its marble
brow !

For Poesy's whole essence, when de-
fined,

Is elevation of the reasoning mind,
When inward sense from Fancy's page
is taught,

And moral feeling ministers to
Thought.

And hence, the natural passions all
agree

In seeking Nature's language—poetry.
When Hope, in soft perspective, from
afar,

Sees lovely scenes more lovely than
they are ;

To deck the landscape, tiptoe Fancy
brings

Her plastic shapes, and bright
imaginings.

Or when man's breast by torturing
pangs is stung,

If fearful silence cease t' enchain his
tongue,

In metaphor, the feelings seek relief,
And all the soul grows eloquent with
grief.

Poetic fire, like Vesta's, pure and
bright,

Should draw from Nature's sun, its
holy light.

With Nature, should the musing
poet roam,

And steal instruction from her classic
tome ;

When 'neath her guidance, least
inclin'd to err—

The ablest painter when he copies *her*.

Beloved Shakespeare ! England's
dearest fame !

Dead is the breast that swells not
at thy name !

Whether thine Ariel skim the seas
along,

Floating on wings ethereal as his
song—

Lear rave amid the tempest—or
Macbeth

Question the hags of hell on midnight
heath—

Immortal Shakespeare ! still, thy
lips impart

The noblest comment on the human
heart.

And as fair Eve, in Eden newly
placed, (*k*)

Gazed on her form, in limpid waters
traced,

And stretch'd her gentle arms, with
pleased surprise,

To meet the image of her own bright
eyes—

So Nature, on thy magic page, sur-
veys

Her sportive graces, and untutored
ways !

Wondering, the soft reflection doth
 she see,
 Then laughing owns she loves herself
 in thee!

Shun not the haunts of crowded cities
 then ;

Nor e'er, as man, forget to study men !
 What though the tumult of the town
 intrude

On the deep silence, and the lofty
 mood ;

'Twill make thy human sympathies
 rejoice,

To hear the music of a human voice—
 To watch strange brows by various
 reason wrought,

To claim the interchange of thought
 with thought ;

T' associate mind with mind, for
 Mind's own weal,

As steel is ever sharpen'd best by
 steel.

T' impassion'd bards, the scenic
 world is dear,—

But Nature's glorious masterpiece
 is here !

All poetry is beauty, but exprest
 In inward essence, not in outward
 vest.

Hence lovely scenes, reflective poets
 find,

Awake their lovelier images in Mind :
 Nor doth the pictur'd earth, the bard
 invite,

The lake of azure, or the heav'n of
 light,

But that his swelling breast arouses
 there,

Something less visible, and much
 more fair !

There is a music in the landscape
 round,—

A silent voice, that speaks without a
 sound—

A witching spirit, that reposing near,
 Breathes to the heart, but comes not
 to the ear !

These softly steal, his kindling soul t'
 embrace,

And natural beauty, gild with moral
 grace.

Think not, when summer breezes
 tell their tale,

The poet's thoughts are with the
 summer gale ;

Think not his Fancy builds her elfin
 dream

On painted floweret, or on sighing
 stream :

No single objects cause his raptured
 starts,

For Mind is narrow'd, not inspir'd by
 parts ;

But o'er the scene the poet's spirit
 broods,

To warm the thoughts that form his
 noblest moods ;

Peopling his solitude with faëry play,
 And beckoning shapes that whisper
 him away,—

While lilled fields, and hedge-row
 blossoms white,

And hills, and glittering streams,
 are full in sight—

The forests wave, the joyous sun be-
 guiles,

And all the poetry of Nature smiles !

Such poetry is formed by Mind, and
 not

By scenic grace of one peculiar spot.
 The artist lingers in the moon-lit
 glade, (1)

And light and shade, with him, are—
 light and shade.

The philosophic chymist wandering
 there,

Dreams of the soil, and nature of the
 air.

The rustic marks the young herbs'
 fresh'ning hue,

And only thinks—his scythe may
 soon pass through !

None " muse on nature with a Poet's
 eye,"

None read, but Poets, Nature's
 poetry !

Its characters are trac'd in mystic
 hand,

And all may gaze, but few can under-
 stand.

Nor here alone the Poet's dwelling
 rear,

Though Beauty's voice perchance is
 sweetest here !

Bind not his footsteps to the sylvan
 scene,

To heathy banks, fair woods, and
 valleys green.

When Mind is all his own ! her dear
 impress

Shall throw a magic o'er the wilder-
 ness,
 As o'er the blossoming vale, and aye
 recall
 Its shadowy plane, and silver water-
 fall,
 Or sleepy crystal pool, reposing by,
 To give the earth a picture of the
 sky!
 Such, gazed on by the spirit, are, I
 ween,
 Lovelier than ever prototype was
 seen;
 For Fancy teacheth Memory's hand
 to trace (*m*)
 Nature's ideal form in Nature's place.
 In every theme by lofty Poet sung,
 The thought should seem to speak,
 and not the tongue.
 When godlike Milton lifts th' exalted
 song,
 The subject bears the burning words
 along—
 Resounds the march of Thought, th'
 o'erflowing line,
 Full cadence, solemn pause, and
 strength divine!
 When Horace chats his neighbour's
 faults away,
 The sportive measures, like his muse,
 are gay;
 For once Good-humour Satire's by-
 way took,
 And all his soul is laughing in his
 book!
 On moral Pope's didactic page is
 found,
 Sound rul'd by sense, and sense made
 clear by sound;
 The power to reason, and the taste to
 please,
 While, as the subject varies in
 degrees,
 He stoops with dignity, and soars
 with ease.
 Hence let our Poets, with discerning
 glance,
 Forbear to imitate the stage of France.
 What though Corneille arouse the
 thrilling chords,
 And walk with Genius o'er th' in-
 spir'd boards;
 What though his rival bring, with
 calmer grace,
 The classic unities of time and place,—

All polish, and all eloquence—'twere
 mean
 To leave the path of Nature for
 Racine;
 When Nero's parent, 'midst her woe,
 defines
 The wrong that tortures—in two
 hundred lines:
 Or when Orestes, madden'd by his
 crime,
 Forgets life, joy, and every thing—
 but rhyme.

While thus to character and na-
 ture, true,
 Still keep the harmony of verse in
 view,
 Yet not in changeless concord,—it
 should be
 Though graceful, nervous—musical,
 though free;
 Not clogg'd by useless drapery, not
 beset
 By the superfluous word, or epithet,
 Wherein Conception only dies in
 state, (*n*)
 As Draco, smother'd by the gar-
 ments' weight—
 But join, Amphion-like (whose magic
 fire
 Won the deep music of the Maian
 lyre,
 To call Bœotia's city from the
 ground),
 The just in structure, with the sweet
 in sound.

Nor this the whole—the poet's classic
 strain
 May flow in smoothest numbers, yet
 in vain;
 And Taste may please, and Fancy
 sport awhile,
 And yet Aonia's muse refuse to smile!
 For lo! her heavenly lips these words
 reveal—
 "The sage may coldly *think*, the bard
 must *feel*!
 And if his writings, to his heart un-
 true,
 Would ape the fervent throb it never
 knew;
 If generous deeds, and Virtue's no-
 blest part,
 And Freedom's voice, could never
 warm that heart;

If Interest tax'd the produce of the
brain,
And fetter'd Genius follow'd in her
train,
Weeping as each unwilling word she
spoke,—
Then hush the lute—its master string
is broke !
In vain, the skilful hand may linger
o'er—
Concord is dead, and music speaks no
more ! ”

There are, and have been such—they
were forgot
If shame could veil their page, if tears
could blot !

There are, and have been, whose dis-
honour'd lay
Aspired t' enrapture that the world
might—pay !

Whose life was one long bribe, oft
counted o'er,—

Brib'd to think on, and brib'd to
think no more ;

Brib'd to laugh, weep, nor ask the
reason why ;

Brib'd to tell truth, and brib'd to gild
a lie !

Oh Man ! for this, the sensual left be-
hind,

We boast our empire o'er the vast of
Mind ?

Oh Mind ! reported valueless, till
sold,

Thought dross till metamorphos'd
into gold

By Midas' touch—breath'st thou
immortal verse

To throw a ducat in an empty purse—
To walk the market at a bellman's
cry,

For knaves to sell, and wond'ring
fools to buy ?

Can Heav'n-born bards, undone by
lucre's lust,

Crouch thus, like Heav'n-born min-
isters, to dust ?

Alas ! to dust indeed—yet wherefore
blame ?

They keep their profits, though they
lose their fame.

Leave to the dross they seek, the
grovelling throng,

And swell with nobler aim th' Aonian
song !

Enough for thee uninfluenc'd and
unhir'd,

If Truth reward the strain herself in-
spir'd !

Enough for thee, if grateful Man com-
mend,

If Genius love, and Virtue call thee
friend !

Enough for thee, to wake th' exalted
mood,

Reprove the erring, and confirm the
good ;

Excite the tender smile, the generous
tear,

Or rouse the thought to loftiest Na-
ture dear,

Which rapturous greets amidst the
fervent line,

Thy name, O Freedom ! glorious Hel-
las, thine !

I love my own dear land—it doth re-
joice

The soul, to stretch my arms, and lift
my voice,

To tell her of my love ! I love her
green

And bowery woods, her hills in mossy
sheen,

Her silver running waters—there's no
spot

In all her dwelling, which my breast
loves not—

No place not heart-enchanted ! Sun-
nier skies,

And calmer waves, may meet an-
other's eyes ;

I love the sullen mist, the stormy sea,
The winds of rushing strength which,

like the land, are free !
Such is my love—yet turning thus to
thee,

Oh Græcia ! I must hail with hardly
less

Of joy, and pride, and deepening ten-
derness,

And feelings wild, I know not to con-
troul,

My other country—country of my
soul !

For so, to me, thou art ! my lips have
sung

Of thee with childhood's lisp, and
harp unstrung !

In thee, my Fancy's pleasant walks
have been,

Telling her tales, while Memory wept
between!
And now for thee 1 joy, with heart
beguiled,
As if a dying friend looked up, and
smiled.

Lo! o'er Ægæa's waves, the shout
hath ris'n!
Lo! Hope hath burst the fetters of
her prison!
And Glory sounds the trump along
the shore,
And Freedom walks where Freedom
walk'd before!
Ipsara glimmers with heroic light,
Redd'ning the waves that lash her
flaming height;
And Ægypt hurries from that dark
blue sea!
Lo! o'er the cliffs of fam'd Ther-
mopylæ,
And voiceful Marathon, the wild
winds sweep,
Bearing this message to the brave
who sleep—
"They come! they come! with their
embattled shock,
From Pelion's steep, and Paros' foam-
dash'd rock!
They come from Tempe's vale, and
Helicon's spring,
And proud Eurotas' banks, the river
king!
They come from Leuctra, from the
waves that kiss
Athena—from the shores of Salamis;
From Sparta, Thebes, Eubœa's hills
of blue—
To live with Hellas—or to sleep with
you!"

Smile—smile, beloved land! and
though no lay
From Doric pipe may charm thy
glades to-day—
Though dear Ionic music murmur not
Adown the vale—its echo all forgot!
Yet smile, beloved land! for soon,
around,
Thy silent earth shall utter forth a
sound,
As whilom—and, its pleasant groves
among,
The Grecian voice shall breathe the
Grecian song,

While the exil'd muse shall 'habit
still
The happy haunts of her Parnassian
hill.
Till then, behold the cold dumb
sepulchre—
The ruin'd column—ocean, earth,
and air,
Man, and his wrongs—thou hast
Tyrtæus there! (o)

And pardon, if across the heaving
main,
Sound the far melody of minstrel
strain,
In wild and fitful gust from England's
shore,
For *his* immortal sake, who never
more
Shall tread with living foot, and spirit
free,
Her fields, or breathe her passionate
poetry—
The pilgrim bard, who lived, and died
for thee,
Oh land of Memory! loving thee no
less
Than parent—with the filial tender-
ness,
And holy ardour of the Argive son,
Straining each nerve to bear thy
chariot on—
Till when its wheels the place of glory
swept,
He laid him down before the shrine
—and slept. (p)

So be it! at his cold unconscious bier,
We fondly sate, and dropp'd the
natural tear—
Yet wept not wisely, for he sank to
rest
On the dear earth his waking thoughts
loved best,
And gently life's last pulses stole
away!
No Moschus sang a requiem o'er his
clay, (q)
But Greece was sad! and breathed
above, below,
The warrior's sigh, the silence, and
the woe!

And is this all? Is this the little
sum
For which we toil—to which our
glories come?

Doth History bend her mouldering
pages o'er,
And Science stretch her bulwark from
the shore,
And Sages search the mystic paths of
Thought,
And Poets charm with lays that
Genius taught—
For this? to labour through their
little day,
To weep an hour, then want the tear
they pay—
To ask the urn, their death and life
to tell,
When the dull dust would give that
tale as well!

Man! hast thou seen the gallant
vessel sweep,
Borrowing her moonlight from the
jealous deep,
And gliding with mute foot, and silver
wing,
Over the waters like a soul-mov'd
thing?
Man, hast thou gazed on this—then
look'd again,
And seen no speck on all that desolate
main,
And heard no sound,—except the
gurgling cry,
The winds half stifled in their mock-
ery?

Woe unto thee! for, thus, thy course
is run,
And, in the fulness of thy noon-day
sun,
The darkness cometh—yea! thou
walk'st abroad
In glory, Child of Mind, Creation's
Lord—
And wisdom's music from thy lips
hath gush'd!
Then comes the *Selah*! and the voice
is hush'd, (?)
And the light past! we seek where
thou hast been
In beauty—but thy beauty is not
seen!
We breathe the air thou breath'dst,
we tread the spot
Thy feet were wont to tread, but find
thee not!
Beyond, sits Darkness with her hag-
gard face,

Brooding fiend-like above thy bury-
ing-place—
Beneath, let wildest Fancy take her fill!
Shall we seek on? we shudder, and
are still!
Yet woe not unto thee, thou child of
Earth!
Though moonlight sleep on thy
deserted hearth,
We will not cry "Alas!" above thy
clay!
It was, perchance, thy joyous pride
to stray
On Mind's lone shore, and linger by
the way:
But now thy pilgrim's staff is laid
aside,
And on thou journeyest o'er the sul-
len tide,
To bless thy wearied sight, and glad
thine heart
With all that Mind's serener skies
impart;
Where Wisdom suns the day no
shades destroy,
And Learning ends in Truth, as hope
in joy:
While *we* stand mournful on the
desert beach,
And wait, and wish, thy distant bark,
to reach,
And weep to watch it, passing from
our sight,
And sound the gun's salute, and sigh
our last "good-night!"

And oh! while thus the spirit
glides away,—
Give to the world its memory with its
clay!
Some page our country's grateful eyes
may scan;
Some useful truth to bless surviving
man;
Some name to honest bosoms justly
dear;
Some grave t' exalt the thought, and
claim the tear;
So when the pilgrim Sun is travelling
o'er
The last blue hill, to gild a distant
shore,
He leaves a freshness in the evening
scene,
That tells Creation where his steps
have been!

NOTES TO BOOK I

NOTE (a).

And peeps at glory from some ancient's back.

"The reason which the learned Bentley gave his daughter for not himself becoming an original writer, instead of wasting his talents on the works of others, is probably the cause of many not attempting original composition. Bentley seemed embarrassed at her honest question, and remained for a considerable time thoughtful. At length he observed—'Child, I am sensible I have not always turned my talents to the proper use for which they were given me; yet I have done something: but the wit and genius of the old authors beguiled me, and as I despaired of raising myself up to their standard upon fair ground, I thought the only chance I had of looking over their heads was to get upon their shoulders.'"—*Curiosities of Literature*, Vol. I.

NOTE (b).

*The gentle Cowley of our native clime,
Lisp'd his first accents in Aonian rhyme.*

A volume of Cowley's poems was published in his fifteenth year; and contains "The Tragical History of Pyramus and Thisbe," written in his tenth.

NOTE (c).

*Alfieri's startling muse tun'd not her
strings,
And dumbly look'd "unutterable things;"
Till when five lustrums o'er his head had
past,*

This Poet's great mind exhibited no precocity. His "Cleopatra," written at the age of twenty-five years, first discovered its author's dramatic genius to himself, and to the world. ["Six lustrums" in text here corrected by authoress to "five."]

NOTE (d).

*See, in that breathless crowd, Olorus stand,
While one fair boy hangs, list'ning, on his
hand—
The young Thucydides!*

It is said that Thucydides, in early youth, was present at the Olympic games when Herodotus recited his History; and that a burst of tears spoke his admiration. "Take care of that boy!" observed the sage turning to Olorus, "he will one day make a great man!"

NOTE (e).

That hail "th' eternal city" in their pride.

"Imperium sine fine dedi," says Virgil's Jupiter. How little did the writer of

those four words dream of their surviving the Glory, whose eternity they were intended to predict! Horace too, in the most exulting of his odes, boldly proclaims that his fame will live as long as

"Capitolium
Scandet cum tacita virgine Pontifex."

Yes! his fame *will live*!—but where now is the Pontifex, and the silent vestal? where now is the Capitol? Such passages are, to my mind, pre-eminently more affecting than all the ruins in the world!

NOTE (f).

And ultra Mitford soar'd to libel Greece.

Mr. Mitford's acknowledged learning, and accuracy in detail, have a claim on our consideration, which we admit with readiness and pleasure; but prejudices, arising probably from early habits and associations, have deformed his work. He is evidently so afraid of taking the mob for the people, that he constantly takes the people for the mob—a perversion much in vogue among despots of Europe, in the nineteenth century. He considers the Athenian Democracy as he would a classical kind of Radicalism; and generously endows Philip of Macedon with a "right divine," not only over his own possessions, but over those of his neighbours. Mr. Mitford lets his readers look at facts: but, whether shortsighted as himself or not, he will not allow them to enjoy that privilege unless they make use of his political glasses; which, by the way, are No. 20,—"*ne plus ultra*!"

NOTE (g).

*But lean on Reason, as your safest rule.
Let doubtful facts, with patient hand, be led,
To take their place on this Procrustean bed!*

We shall find some clever and animated observations on this subject, in Voltaire's preface to his "Charles XII." I should extract them, but the book is too well known for me to doubt their having come to the knowledge of most readers: and a new publication is perhaps the only place, in which we are not glad to meet an old acquaintance.

NOTE (h).

Enlighten'd Miller of our modern days!

Those who may think this praise excessive are referred to the "Philosophy of Modern History," given to the world by Dr. Miller; and thence are requested to judge of the reality of the merit.

NOTE (i).

*The whispered sound, which stole on Descartes' ear,
Hallowing the sunny visions of his youth
With that eternal mandate, "Search for Truth!"*

"Descartes, when young, and in a country seclusion, his brain exhausted by meditation, and his imagination heated to excess, heard a voice in the air which called him to pursue the search of Truth: he never doubted the vision, and this dream, in the delirium of Genius, charmed him even in his after studies."—*D'Israeli's "Literary Character."*

NOTE (j).

*He died, the glorious! who, with soaring sight,
Sought some new world, to plant his foot of might;*

Archimedes wrote to Hiero, that, if he had another world to stand on, he could move this by the power of his machinery. When Cicero stumbled on his grave, he found it, "Septum undique et vestitum vepribus et dumetis." What a homily!

NOTE (k).

*So hard to bear, with unobstructed sight,
Th' excess of darkness, or th' extreme of light.*

Gray ingeniously asks, "Must I plunge into metaphysics?" (he might in some cases have said history)—"Alas! I cannot see in the dark; Nature has not furnished me with the optics of a cat. Must I pore upon mathematics? Alas! I cannot see in too much light; I am no eagle."

NOTE (l).

*So Buffon erred; amidst his chilling dream,
The judgment grew material as the theme:*

Buffon was a materialist upon principle, though a Catholic by observance. Upon reading a poem on the immortality of the soul, he exclaimed—"Religion would be a noble present if this were true."

NOTE (m).

Sternly they strove—th' unequal race was run!

Leibnitz attacked with violence Sir Isaac Newton's opinion, that the seeds of mortality would be developed in the fabric of the universe if unrenewed by its divine Maker. Such an opinion he considered "impious;" and, in opposition to it, maintained, that as Creation proceeded from the hand of Perfection, it is perfect—and as perfect, immutable.

NOTE (n).

Devoted Southey! if thou had'st not tried!

Few are ready to bear a more respectful tribute to Dr. Southey's poetical talents than the writer of this Work, who however begs to be allowed to admire his genius, without extending that admiration either to his politics or Hexameters.

NOTE (o).

Dwell not on parts! for parts contract the mind;

Lord Bacon thus expresses himself—"Sciences distinguished have a dependence upon universal knowledge, to be augmented, and rectified by the superior light thereof; as well as the parts and members of a science have upon the maxims of the same science, and the mutual light and consent which one part receiveth of another."—*Interpretatio Naturæ.*

NOTE (p).

For too much learning maketh no man mad!

Perhaps, after all, the great danger of knowing is in not knowing enough; and certainly "il pie fermo" is not "il piu basso." "It is true," says Lord Bacon, "that a little philosophy inclineth men's minds to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth their minds about to religion." This is an acute observation, and if generalized will be found equally so. The errors attending Intellectual Elevation I have alluded to and allowed; but that elevation is only comparative. "Alps on Alps arise!" and the *ars longa vita brevis* prevents our attaining the topmost height. In our progress towards it then is our risk—lest we rejoice to have gone a yard, without remembering we have a mile to go. Like the princess, in the pretty Arabian tale, who was ascending the mountain in search of her talking bird and golden water, if during the ascent we turn back to gaze, we are transformed into black stones—capable of impeding others, though not of advancing ourselves.

NOTE (q).

The sage how learned! and the man how meek!

The character of Sir Isaac Newton forms a sublime comment on the foregoing note. "I don't know," said that greatest, and humblest of men, "what I may seem to the world; but as to myself, I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble, or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the

great ocean of Truth lay all undiscovered before me."—We find the anecdote in Spence.

NOTES TO BOOK II.

NOTE (a).

*E'en Cato—had he own'd the Senate's will,
And wash'd his toga—had been Cato still.*

Plutarch relates that Cato Uticensis was thought to disgrace the Prætorship by the meanness of his dress. To couple "disgrace" with the name of Cato revolts the soul; and yet who would call his "*exigua toga*" a proof of the loftiness of his virtue, or think him less a patriot if he had kept on his shoes?

NOTE (b).

*"All is idea! and nothing real springs
But God, and Reason—" (not the right of
kings?)*

An obvious question. Pyrrho the Elean, founder of the Ideal Philosophy, on the near approach of carts and carriages, did not think it worth while to turn aside, or change his posture. Dr. Berkeley, with less consistency, but more prudence, found time (and conscience) to write three sermons in vindication of passive obedience.

NOTE (c).

*While (coldly studious!) thine ingenious
scroll
Endows the mimic statue with a soul
Compos'd of sense—*

It is the object of Condillac's work, "*Sur la Sensation*," to prove "*que la réflexion n'est dans son principe que la sensation même*," and that our ideas are only sensation transformed. His statue is very cleverly put together, but is a statue after all.

NOTE (d).

*What triumph hath the "Art of Thinking"
there!*

"*L'Art de Penser*"—title to one of Condillac's works.

NOTE (e).

*To judge is yours!—then why submissive
call,*

"The master said so?"

An "*argumentum ad verecundiam*" used by the Pythagoreans. I so much admire a passage in Plato's *Phædo*, illustrative of these lines, that the reader must forgive my referring to it. Cebes supports with animation an opinion in opposition to Socrates, who, turning a gratified countenance ("*ἡσυχῆναι ἔμελλε*," says the narrator) to his other

disciples, benignly observes—"Cebes always looks into principles; neither will he admit, without examination, the sentiments of any man."

We find in Dr. Reid the following striking precept—"Let us, as becomes philosophers, lay aside authority."

NOTE (f).

*If human faults to Pato's page belong,
Not ev'n with Plato, willingly go wrong.*

Cicero's assertion, "*errare mehercule malo cum Platone quam cum istis vera sentire*," is more boldly said than singularly thought. How many are there, among the canaille of readers, prepared to praise an inferior volume, with the Waverley magic on its title-page; to commend a commonplace by Rogers, or a far-fetched allusion by Moore! Even among the more critical of us, have the names of Scott, and Moore, and Rogers, no secret influence? Do we not so devoutly admire the noisy slippered Venus, that at length we begin to reverence, abstractedly, the noisy slippers? This is so, and I will not quarrel with it; since to forget the trifling faults of a great writer, is the gratitude we owe to his perfections. But what, in subjects of taste and sentiment, may be tolerated as pardonable enthusiasm, must in grave discussion, be condemned as unpardonable weakness. If therefore we judge Cicero only by the above-cited passage, we shall pronounce him to be a good Platonist (in one sense of the word), but a very bad philosopher. It is not with him, "*Amicus Plato sed magis amica veritas*;" he loves truth less than he loves Plato.

NOTE (g).

Or Memnon's statue singing 'neath the sun.

The statue of Memnon, the Ethiopian king, was said to utter musical sounds at the rising of the sun. Strabo witnessed this singular phenomenon, but could only explain it by conjecture.

NOTE (h).

*But, ah! our Muse of Britain, standing near,
Hath dimm'd my tablet with a pensive tear!*

It is a practice too common, but manifestly unjust, to visit on the memory of distinguished authors their individual failings. I wish therefore to state expressly, that the Muse of Britain is not here supposed to animadvert on Lord Bacon's character as a statesman, with which she has nothing to do in this place. It is with regard to his writings that I cannot avoid expressing a regret, and I do so reverentially, that pages so glorious

should be polluted by passages so servile. "As men, we share his fame"—as Englishmen, we feel his degradation. If indeed the "Novum Organum," and "Advancement of Learning," kindled our souls into a less proud consciousness of intellectual dignity, we might better brook hearing a king called "a mortal god upon earth," and James the First compared to Solomon. But Lord Bacon first teaches us how high Philosophy can soar, and then how low a philosopher can stoop.

NOTE (i).

And strikes Pierian chords—when Irving speaks!

There is a pleasure in being benefitted by the labours of Genius: there is a pride in possessing powers capable of benefiting. The pride Mr. Irving may justly feel; and which of his readers, or hearers, cannot boast the pleasure? It gratifies me to be enabled to express in this place my admiration of his talents, and my respect for their direction.

NOTE (j).

*Ungrateful Plato! o'er thy cradled rest,
The Muse hath hung, and all her love
express;*

Plato wrote poetry in his youth; and when indeed did not Plato write poetry? Longinus numbers him among the imitators of Homer—"Πάντων δὲ τούτων μάλιστα ὁ Πλάτων ἀπὸ τοῦ Ὀμηρικοῦ ἐκείνου νόματος εἰς αὐτὸν κυρία ὅσας παραφύσεις ἀποχρητεύσας."

NOTE (k).

*And as fair Eve, in Eden newly placed,
Gazed on her form, in limpid waters traced,*

The reader will here perceive an allusion to that beautiful passage in "Paradise Lost," book the fourth, where Eve describes to Adam her emotions on first beholding her own reflection in "the clear smooth lake"—

"A shape within the watery gleam appeared,
Bending to look on me—I started back—
It started back," etc.

NOTE (l).

*The artist lingers in the moon-lit glade,
And light and shade, with him, are—light
and shade.*

"Quam multa vident Pictores in umbris et eminentia quæ nos non videmus," is the motto to Mr. Price's admirable essay on the Picturesque. Dugald Stewart proposes its reversion—"Quam multa videmus nos quæ Pictores non vident," which if it be as true as ingenious, will go a great way in assisting my position.

NOTE (m).

to trace

Nature's ideal form in Nature's place.

Lord Bacon says of Poetry, that "it was ever thought to have some participation of divineness, because it doth raise and erect the mind, by submitting the shews of things to the desires of the mind; whereas Reason doth buckle and bow the mind unto the nature of things."—*Advancement of Learning*, Book 2.

NOTE (n).

*Wherein Conception only dies in state,
As Draco, smother'd by the garments'
weight—*

The Athenian People being accustomed to testify their approbation by the casting of their garments on the approved individual, Draco was honourably smothered through excess of popularity.

NOTE (o).

*—behold the cold dumb sepulchre—
The ruin'd column—ocean, earth, and air,
Man, and his wrongs—thou hast Tyrtæus
there!*

The inspiring effect of the productions of this Greek Poet, during the war between the Lacedæmonians and Messenians, is well known.

NOTE (p).

*He laid him down before the shrine—and
slept.*

Herodotus relates of Cleobis and Bito, Argive brothers, that on a festival of Juno they themselves, in default of oxen, drew the chariot of the priestess, their mother, forty-five stadia to the temple. Amidst the shouts of an admiring multitude, their grateful parent asked of the gods the best boon mortals could receive, wherewith to reward the piety of her sons. The young men fell asleep within the temple, and woke no more.

NOTE (q).

*No Moschus sang a requiem o'er his clay,
That exquisite effusion of Moschus over
the grave of Bion, his "vatis amici"—
his brother in poetry and love—will occur
to the reader's recollection.*

NOTE (r).

*Then comes the Selah! and the voice is
hush'd,*

Respecting this Hebrew word, which is found "seventy times in the Psalms, and three times in Habakkuk," Calmet observes—"One conjecture is, that it means the end or a pause, and that the ancient musicians put it occasionally in the margin of their psalters, to shew where a musical pause was to be made, and where the tune ended."

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

1826

TO MY FATHER ON HIS BIRTH-DAY

"Causa fuit Pater his."—*Hor.*

AMIDST the days of pleasant mirth,
That throw their halo round our
earth ;

Amidst the tender thoughts that rise
To call bright tears to happy eyes ;
Amidst the silken words that move
To syllable the names we love ;
There glides no day of gentle bliss
More soothing to the heart than *this* !
No thoughts of fondness e'er appear
More fond, than those I write of here !
No name can e'er on tablet shine,
My father ! more beloved than *thine* !

'Tis sweet, adown the shady past,
A lingering look of love to cast—
Back th' enchanted world to call,
That beamed around us first of all ;
And walk with Memory fondly o'er
The paths where Hope had been be-
fore—

Sweet to receive the sylphic sound
That breathes in tenderness around,
Repeating to the listening ear
The names that made our childhood
dear—

For parted Joy, like Echo, kind,
Will leave her dulcet voice behind,
To tell, amidst the magic air,
How oft she smiled and lingered there.
Oh ! let the deep Aonian shell
Breathe tuneful numbers, clear and
well,

While the glad Hours, in fair array,
Lead on this buxom Holiday ;
And Time, as on his way he springs,
Hates the last bard who gave him
wings ;

For 'neath thy gentleness of praise,
My Father ! rose my early lays !
And when the lyre was scarce awake,
I loosed its strings for *thy* loved sake ;
Wooed the kind Muses—but the while
Thought only how to win thy smile—
My proudest fame—my dearest
pride—

More dear than all the world beside !

And now, perchance, I seek the tone
For magic that is more its own ;
But still my Father's looks remain
The best Mæcenas of my strain ;
My gentlest joy, upon his brow
To read the smile, that meets me
now—

To hear him, in his kindness, say
The words—perchance he'll speak to-
day !

SPENSERIAN STANZAS

ON A BOY OF THREE YEARS OLD

CHILD of the sunny lockes and
beautifull brow !

In thoughtfull tendernes I gaze
on thee—

Upon thy daintie cheek Expres-
sion's glow

Daunceth in tyme to thine heart's
melodie ;

Ne mortall wight mote lovelier
urchin see !

Nathlesse it teens this pensive brest
of mine

To think—belive the innocent
revelrie

Shall be eclipsed in those soft blue
eyne—

Whenso the howre of youth no more
for thee shall shine.

Ah me ! eftsoons thy childhood's
pleasaunt dais

Shall fly away, and be a whilome
thing !

And sweetest mearimake, and
birthday lais

Be recked not of, except when
memories bring

Feres to their embers with awaking
wing,

To make past love rejoyce thy
tender sprite,

Albeit the toyles of daunger thee
enring !

Child of the wavy lockes and brow
of light—

Then be thy conscience pure, as *now*
thy face is bright.

VERSES TO MY BROTHER

"For we were nursed upon the self-same hill."
—*Lycidas*.

I WILL write down thy name, and
when 'tis writ,
Will turn me from the hum that
mortals keep
In the wide world without, and gaze
on it !
It telleth of the past—calling from
sleep
Such dear, yet mournful thoughts, as
make us smile, and weep.

Belov'd and best ! what thousand
feelings start,
As o'er the paper's course my fin-
gers move—
My brother ! dearest, kindest as
thou art !
How can these lips my heart's
affection prove ?
I could not speak the words, if
words could speak my love.
Together have we passed our in-
fant hours,
Together sported Childhood's
spring away,
Together culled young Hope's fast
budding flowers,
To wreath the forehead of each
coming day !
Yes ! for the present's sun makes e'en
the future gay.

And when the laughing mood was
nearly o'er,
Together, many a minute did we
wile
On Horace' page, or Maro's sweeter
lore ;
While one young critic, on the
classic style,
Would sagely try to frown, and make
the other smile.

But now alone thou con'st the
ancient tome—
And sometimes thy dear studies,
it may be,
Are crossed by dearer dreams of
me and home !
None I muse on Homer—thoughts
are free—
And if mine often stray, they go in
search of thee !

I may not praise thee *here*—I will
not bless !

Yet all thy goodness doth my mem-
ory bear,

Cherished by more than Friend-
ship's tenderness—

And, in the silence of my evening
prayer,

Thou shalt not be forgot—thy dear
name shall be there !

STANZAS ON THE DEATH OF
LORD BYRON.

—— λέγε πᾶσιν ἀπώλετο.—*Bion*.

—— "I am not now
That which I have been."—*Childe Harold*.

HE *was*, and *is* not ! Græcia's
trembling shore,

Sighing through all her palmy
groves, shall tell

That Harold's pilgrimage at last
is o'er—

Mute the impassioned tongue, and
tuneful shell,

That erst was wont in noblest
strains to swell—

Hushed the proud shouts that rode
Ægæa's wave !

For lo ! the great Deliv'rer breathes
farewell !

Gives to the world his mem'ry and
a grave—

Expiring in the land he only lived to
save !

Mourn, Hellas, mourn ! and o'er
thy widow'd brow,

For aye, the cypress wreath of sor-
row twine ;

And in thy new-form'd beauty,
desolate, throw

The fresh-cull'd flowers on *his*
sepulchral shrine.

Yes ! let that heart whose fervour
was all thine,

In consecrated urn lamented be !
That generous heart where genius
thrill'd divine,

Hath spent its last most glorious
throb for thee,

Then sank amid the storm that made
thy children free !

Britannia's Poet ! Græcia's hero,
sleeps !

And Freedom, bending o'er the
breathless clay,

Lifts up her voice, and in her
anguish weeps !
For us, a night hath clouded o'er
our day,
And hush'd the lips that breath'd
our fairest lay.
Alas ! and must the British lyre
resound
A requiem, while the spirit wings
away
Of him who on its strings such
music found,
And taught its startling chords to
give so sweet a sound !
The theme grows sadder—but my
soul shall find
A language in these tears ! No
more—no more !
Soon, 'midst the shriekings of the
tossing wind,
The "dark blue depths" he sang
of, shall have bore
Our *all* of Byron to his native shore !
His grave is thick with voices—to
the ear
Murm'ring 'an awful tale of great-
ness o'er ;
But Memory strives with Death,
and lingering near,
Shall consecrate the dust of Harold's
lonely bier !

MEMORY

My Fancy's steps have often strayed
To some fair vale the hills have made ;
Where sparkling waters travel o'er,
And hold a mirror to the shore ;
Winding with murmurings in and out,
To find the flowers which grow about.
And there, perchance, in childhood
bold,
Some little elf, four summers old,
Adown the vales may chance to run,
To hunt his shadow in the sun !
But when the waters meet his eyes,
He starts and stops with glad surprise,
And shouts, with merry voice, to view
The banks of green, the skies of blue,
Th' inverted flocks that bleating go,
Lilies, and trees of apple blow,
Seeming so beautiful below !
He peeps above—he glances round,
And then looks down, and thinks he's
found
Reposing in the stream, to woo one,
A world ev'n lovelier than the true one.

B.P.

Thus, with visions gay and light,
Hath Fancy lov'd my page to dight ;
Yet Thought hath, through a vista,
seen

Something less frivolous, I ween :
Then, while my chatting pen runs on,
I'll tell you what she dreamt upon.

Memory's the streamlet of the scene,
Which sweeps the hills of Life be-
tween ;

And, when our walking hour is past,
Upon its shore we rest at last ;
And love to view the waters fair,
And see lost joys depicted there.

My —, when thy feet are led
To press those banks we all must
tread—

May Virtue's smile and Learning's
praise

Adorn the waters to thy gaze ;
And, o'er their lucid course, be lent
The sunshine of a life well spent !
Then, if a thought should glad thy
breast

Of those who loved thee first and best,
My name, perchance, may haunt the
spot,
Not quite unprized—nor all forgot.

TO——

MINE is a wayward lay ;
And, if its echoing rhymes I try to
string,
Proveth a truant thing,
When some names I love, send it
away !

For then, eyes swimming o'er,
And clasped hands, and smiles in
fondness meant,
Are much more eloquent—
So it had fain begone, and speak no
more !

Yet shall it come again,
Ah, friend below'd ! if so thy wishes be,
And, with mild melody,
I will, upon thine ear, cadence my
strain—

Cadence my simple line,
Unfashion'd by the cunning hand
of Art,

But coming from my heart,
To tell the message of its love to
thine !

D

As ocean shells, when taken
From ocean's bed, will faithfully re-
peat
Her ancient music sweet—
Ev'n so these words, true to my heart,
shall waken !

Oh ! while our bark is seen,
Our little bark of kindly, social love,
Down life's clear stream to move
Toward the summer shores, where all
is green—

So long thy name shall bring
Echoes of joy unto the grateful gales,
And thousand tender tales,
To freshen the fond hearts that round
thee cling !

Hast thou not looked upon
The flowerets of the field in lowly
dress ?

Blame not my simpleness—
Think only of my love !—my song is
gone.

STANZAS

OCCASIONED BY A PASSAGE IN MR.
EMERSON'S JOURNAL, WHICH
STATES THAT, ON THE MENTION OF
LORD BYRON'S NAME, CAPTAIN
DEMETRIUS, AN OLD ROUMELIOT,
BURST INTO TEARS.

NAME not his name, or look afar—
For when my spirit hears
That name, its strength is turned to
woe—

My voice is turned to tears.

Name me the host and battle-storm,
Mine own good sword shall stem ;
Name me the foeman and the block,
I have a smile for *them* !

But name *him* not, or cease to mark
This brow where passions sweep—
Behold, a warrior is a man,
And as a man may weep !

I could not scorn my Country's foes,
Did not these tears descend—
I could not love my Country's fame,
And not my Country's Friend.

Deem not his memory e'er can be
Upon our spirits dim—

Name us the generous and the free,
And we must think of *him* !

For his voice resounded through our
land

Like the voice of liberty,
As when the war-trump of the wind
Upstirs our dark blue sea.

His arm was in the foremost rank,
Where embattled thousands roll—
His name was in the love of Greece,
And his spell was on her soul !

But the arm that wielded her good
sword,

The brow that wore the wreath,
The lips that breathed the deathless
thought—

They went asleep in death.

Ye left his HEART, when ye took
away

The dust in funeral state ;
And we dumbly placed in a little urn
That home of all things great.

The banner streamed—the war-shout
rose—

Our heroes played their part ;
But not a pulse would throb or burn—
Oh ! could it be *his* heart !

I will not think—'tis worse than vain
Upon such thoughts to keep ;
Then, Briton, name me not his
name—

I cannot choose but weep !

THE PAST

THERE is a silence upon the Ocean,
Albeit it swells with a feverish
motion ;

Like to the battle-camp's fearful calm,
While the banners are spread, and the
warriors arm.

The winds beat not their drum to the
waves,

But sullenly moan in the distant
caves ;

Talking over, before they rise,
Some of their dark conspiracies.

And so it is in this life of ours,
A calm may be on the present hours,
But the calmest hour of festive glee
May turn the mother of woe to thee.

I will betake me to the Past,
And she shall make my love at last

I will find my home in her tarrying-
place—
I will gaze all day on her deathly
face !

Her form, though awful, is fair to
view ;
The clasp of her hand, though cold,
is true ;
Her shadowy brow hath no change-
fulness,
And her numbered smiles can grow no
less !

Her voice is like a pleasant song,
Which we have not heard for very
long,
And which a joy on our souls will cast,
Though we know not where we heard
it last.

She shall walk with me, away, away,
Where'er the mighty have left their
clay ;
She shall speak to me in places lone,
With a low and holy tone.

Ay ! when I have lit my lamp at night,
She will be present with my sprite ;
And I will say, whate'er it be,
Every word she telleth me !

THE PRAYER

METHOUGHT that I did stand upon
a tomb—
And all was silent as the dust be-
neath,
While feverish thoughts upon my
soul would come,
Losing my words in tears : I
thought of death ;
And prayed that when my lips gave
out the breath,
The friends I loved like life might
stay behind ;
So, for a little while, my name
might eath
Be something dear,—spoken with
voices kind,
Heard with remembering looks, from
eyes which tears would blind !

I prayed that I might sink into my
rest,
(O foolish, selfish prayer !) before
them all ;

So I might look my last on those
loved best—
So never would my voice repining
call,
And never would my tears impas-
sioned fall
On one familiar face turning to
clay !
So would my tune of life be musical,
Albeit abrupt—like airs the Span-
iards play,
Which in the sweetest part break off,
and die away.

Methought I looked around ! the
scene was rife
With little vales, green banks, and
waters heaving ;
And every living thing did joy in
life,
And every thing of beauty did seem
living—
Oh then, life's pulse was at my
heart reviving ;
And then I knew that it was good
to bear
Dispensed woe, that by the spirit's
grieving
It might be weaned from a world so
fair !—
Thus with submissive words mine
heart did close its prayer.

ON A PICTURE OF RIEGO'S WIDOW

PLACED IN THE EXHIBITION

DAUGHTER of Spain ! a passer by
May mark the cheek serenely
pale—
The dark eyes which dream silently,
And the calm lip which gives no
wail !
Calm ! it bears not a deeper trace
Of feelings it disdained to show ;
We look upon the Widow's face,
And only read the Patriot's woe !
No word, no look, no sigh of thine,
Would make *his* glory seem more
dim ;
Thou would'st not give to vulgar eye
The sacred tear which fell for HIM.
Thou would'st not hold to the world's
view
Thy ruined joys, thy broken heart—

The jeering world—it only knew
Of all thine anguish—that thou
WERT!

While o'er *his* grave thy steps would
go
With a firm tread,—stilling thy
love,—

As if the dust would blush below
To feel one faltering foot above.

For Spain, *he* dared the noble strife—
For Spain, he gave his latest
breath;

And he who lived the Patriot's life,
Was dragged to die the traitor's
death!

And the shout of thousands swept
around,
As he stood the traitor's block be-
side;

But his dying lips gave a free sound—
Let the foe weep!—thy brow had
pride!

Yet haply in the midnight air,
When none might part thy God
and thee,

The lengthened sob, the passionate
prayer,

Have spoken thy soul's agony!

But silent else, thou past away—
The plaint unbreath'd, the anguish
hid—

More voiceless than the echoing clay
Which idly knocked thy coffin's
lid.

Peace be to thee! while Britons seek
This place, if British souls they bear,
'Twill start the crimson in the cheek
To see Riego's widow *THERE!*

SONG

WEEP, as if you thought of laughter!
Smile, as tears were coming after!
Marry your pleasures to your woes;
And think life's green well worth its
rose!

No sorrow will your heart betide,
Without a comfort by its side;
The sun may sleep in his sea-bed,
But you have starlight overhead.

Trust not to Joy! the rose of June,
When opened wide, will wither soon;

Italian days without twilight,
Will turn them suddenly to night.

Joy, most changeful of all things,
Flits away on rainbow wings;
And when they look the gayest, know,
It is that they are spread to go!

THE DREAM

A FRAGMENT

I HAD a dream!—my spirit was
unbound

From the dark iron of its dungeon,
clay,

And rode the steeds of Time;—my
thoughts had sound,

And spoke without a word,—I went
away

Among the buried ages, and did lay
The pulses of my heart beneath the
touch

Of the rude minstrel Time, that he
should play

Thereon, a melody which might
seem such

As musing spirits love—mournful, but
not too much!

I had a dream—and there mine eyes
did see

The shadows of past deeds like
present things—

The sepulchres of Greece and
Hesperly,

Ægyptus, and old lands, gave up
their kings,

Their prophets, saints, and min-
strels, whose lute-strings

Keep a long echo—yea, the dead,
white bones

Did stand up by the house whereto
Death clings,

And dressed themselves in life,
speaking of thrones,

And fame, and power, and beauty, in
familiar tones!

I went back further still, for I be-
held

What time the earth was one fair
Paradise—

And over such bright meads the
waters welled,

I wot the rainbow was content to
rise

Upon the earth, when absent from
the skies !
And there were tall trees that I
never knew,
Whereon sate nameless birds in
merry guise,
Folding their radiant wings, as the
flowers do,
When summer nights send sleep
down with the dew.

* * *

Anon there came a change—a
terrible motion,
That made all living things grow
pale and shake !
The dark Heavens bowed them-
selves unto the ocean,
Like a strong man in strife—Ocean
did take
His flight across the mountains ;
and the lake
Was lashed into a sea where the
winds ride—
Earth was no more, for in her
merrymake
She had forgot her God—Sin
claimed his bride,
And with his vampire breath sucked
out her life's fair tide !

Life went back to her nostrils, and
she raised
Her spirit from the waters once
again—
The lovely sights, on which I erst
had gazed,
Were *not*—though she was beautiful
as when
The Grecian called her " Beauty "
—sinful men
Walked i' the track of the waters,
and felt bold—
Yea, they looked up to Heaven in
calm disdain,
As if no eye had seen its vault un-
fold
Darkness, and fear, and death !—as
if a tale were told !

And ages fled away within my
dream ;
And still Sin made the heart his
dwelling-place,
Eclipsing Heaven from men ; but it
would seem
That two or three dared commune
face to face,

And speak of the soul's life, of hope,
and grace—
Anon there rose such sounds as
angels breathe—
For a God came to die, bringing
down peace—
" Pan was *not* ; " and the darkness
that did wreath
The earth, passed from the soul—Life
came by death !

* * *

RIGA'S LAST SONG

I HAVE looked my last on my native
land,
And over these strings I throw my
hand,
To say in the death-hour's min-
strelsy,
Hellas, my country ! farewell to thee !
I have looked my last on my native
shore ;
I shall tread my country's plains no
more ;
But my last thought is of her fame ;
But my last breath speaketh her name !
And though these lips shall soon be
still,
They may now obey the spirit's will ;
Though the dust be fettered, the
spirit is free—
Hellas, my country ! farewell to thee !
I go to death—but I leave behind
The stirrings of Freedom's mighty
mind ;
Her voice shall arise from plain to sky,
Her steps shall tread where my ashes
lie !

I looked on the mountains of proud
Souli,
And the mountains they seemed to
look on me ;
I spoke my thought on Marathon's
plain,
And Marathon seemed to speak
again !

And as I journeyed on my way,
I saw an infant group at play ;
One shouted aloud in his childish glee,
And showed me the heights of Ther-
mopylæ !

I gazed on peasants hurrying by,—
The dark Greek pride crouched in
their eye ;

So I swear in my death-hour's
minstrelsy,
Hellas, my country! thou *shalt* be free!
No more!—I dash my lyre on the
ground—

I tear its strings from their home of
sound—

For the music of slaves shall never keep
Where the hand of a freeman was
wont to sweep!

And I bend my brows above the block,
Silently waiting the swift death shock;
For these lips shall speak what be-
comes the free—

Or—Hellas, my country! farewell to
thee!

* * *

He bowed his head with a Patriot's
pride,

And his dead trunk fell the mute lyre
beside!

The soul of each had passed away—
Soundless the strings—breathless the
clay!

THE VISION OF FAME

DID ye ever sit on summer noon,
Half musing and half asleep,
When ye smile in such a dreamy way,
Ye know not if ye weep—

When the little flowers are thick be-
neath,

And the welkin blue above;
When there is not a sound but the
cattle's low,

And the voice of the woodland dove?
A while ago, and I dream'd thus—

I mused on ancient story,—
For the heart like a minstrel of old
doth seem,

It delighteth to sing of glory.

What time I saw before me stand
A bright and lofty One;

A golden lute was in her hand,
And her brow drooped thereon.

But the brow that drooped was
rais'd soon,

Showing its royal sheen—
It was, I guessed, no human brow,
Though pleasant to human een.

And this brow of peerless majesty
With its whiteness did enshroud

Two eyes that, darkly mystical,
'Gan look up at a cloud.

Like to the hair of Berenice,
Fetch'd from its house of light,
Was the hair which wreathed her
shadowless form—
And Fame the ladye high!

But as she wended on to me,
My heart's deep fear was chidden;
For she called up the sprite of Melody,
Which in her lute lay hidden.

When ye speak to well-beloved ones,
Your voice is tender and low:
The wires methought did love her
touch—

For they did answer so.

And her lips in such a quiet way
Gave the chant soft and long,—
You might have thought she only
breathed,

And that her breath was song:—

"When Death shrouds thy memory,
Love is no shrine—

The dear eyes that weep for thee
Soon sleep like thine!

The wail murmured over thee
Fainteth away;

And the heart which kept love for
thee

Turns into clay!

"But would'st thou remembered be,
Make me thy vow;

This verse that flows gushingly,
Telleth thee how—

Linking thy hand in mine,
Listen to me,

So not a thought of thine
Dieth with thee—

"Rifle thy pulsing heart
Of the gift, love made;

Bid thine eye's light depart;
Let thy cheek fade!

Give me the slumber deep,
Which night-long seems;

Give me the joys that creep
Into thy dreams!

"Give me thy youthful years,
Merriest that fly—

So the words, spoke in tears,
Liveth for aye!

So thy sepulchral stone,
Nations may raise—

What time thy soul hath known
The worth of praise!"

She did not sing this chant to me,
Though I was sitting by;
But I listened to it with chainèd
breath,
That had no power to sigh.
And ever as the chant went on,
Its measure changed to wail;
And ever as the lips sang on,
Her face did grow more pale.
Paler and paler—till anon
A fear came o'er my soul;
For the flesh curled up from her bones,
Like to a blasted scroll!

Ay! silently it dropped away,
Before my wondering sight—
There was only a bleached skeleton,
Where erst was ladye bright!
But still the vacant sockets gleamed
With supernatural fires—
But still the bony hands did ring
Against the shuddering wires!
Alas, alas! I wended home,
With a sorrow and a shame—
Is Fame the rest of our poor hearts?
Woe's me! for THIS is FAME!

PROMETHEUS BOUND

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK OF ÆSCHYLUS

1833

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

PROMETHEUS HEPHÆSTUS
OCEANUS Io, daughter of Inachus
HERMES STRENGTH AND FORCE

Chorus of Ocean Nymphs

SCENE.—STRENGTH and FORCE, HEPHÆSTUS, and PROMETHEUS, at the Rocks.

Strength. We reach the utmost
limit of the earth,
The Scythian track, the desert with-
out man,—
And now, Hephæstus, thou must
needs fulfil
The mandate of our father, and, with
links
Indissoluble of adamantine chains,
Fasten against this beetling precipice,
This guilty god! Because he filched
away
Thine own bright flower, the glory of
plastic fire,
And gifted mortals with it,—such a sin,
It doth behove he expiate to the gods,
Learning to accept the empery of
Zeus,
And leave off his old trick of loving
man.
Hephæstus. O Strength and Force,
—for you, our Zeus's will
Presents a deed for doing,—no more!
—but I,
I lack your daring, up this storm-
rent chasm,
To fix with violent hands a kindred god.
Howbeit necessity compels me so

That I must dare it—and our Zeus
commands
With a most inevitable word. Ho,
thou!
High-thoughted son of Themis who is
sage!
Thee loth, I loth must rivet fast in
chains
Against this rocky height unclomb
by man,
Where never human voice nor face
shall find
Out thee who lov'st them, and thy
beauty's flower,
Scorched in the sun's clear heat, shall
fade away.
Night shall come up with garniture
of stars
To comfort thee with shadow, and
the sun
Disperse, with retriçkt beams, the
morning-frosts,
But through all changes, sense of
present woe
Shall vex thee sore, because with
none of them
There comes a hand to free. Such
fruit is plucked
From love of man!—and in that thou,
a god,
Didst brave the wrath of gods and
give away
Undue respect to mortals, for that crime
Thou art adjudged to guard this joy-
less rock,

Erect, unslumbering, bending not the knee,
And many a cry and unavailing moan
To utter on the air! For Zeus is stern,

✓ And new-made kings are cruel.
Strength. Be it so.
Why loiter in vain pity? Why not hate
A god the gods hate?—one, too, who betrayed

Thy glory unto men?
Hephaestus. An awful thing
Is kinship joined to friendship.

Strength. Grant it be;
Is disobedience to the Father's word
A possible thing? Dost quail not
more for that?

Hephaestus. Thou, at least, art a stern one! ever bold!

Strength. Why, if I wept, it were no remedy!

And do not thou spend labour on the air
To bootless uses.

Hephaestus. Cursed handicraft!
I curse and hate thee, O my craft!

Strength. Why hate
Thy craft, most plainly innocent of all
These pending ills?

Hephaestus. I would some other hand
Were here to work it!

Strength. All work hath its pain,
Except to rule the gods. There is none free

Except King Zeus.

Hephaestus. I know it very well:
I argue not against it.

Strength. Why not, then,
Make haste, and lock the fetters over
HIM,

Lest Zeus behold thee lagging.

Hephaestus. Here be chains—
Zeus may behold these.

Strength. Seize him,—strike amain!
Strike with the hammer on each side
his hands—

Rivet him to the rock.

Hephaestus. The work is done,
And thoroughly done.

Strength. Still faster grapple him,—
Wedge him in deeper,—leave no
inch to stir!

He's terrible for finding a way out
From the irremediable.

Hephaestus. Here's an arm, at least,
Grappled past freeing.

Strength. Now, then, buckle me

The other securely. Let this wise one
learn

He's duller than our Zeus.

Hephaestus. Oh, none but HE
Accuse me justly!

Strength. Now, straight through
the chest,

Take him and bite him with the
clenching tooth

Of the adamantine wedge, and rivet
him.

Hephaestus. Alas, Prometheus!
what thou sufferest here,
I sorrow over.

Strength. Dost thou flinch again,
And breathe groans for the enemies
of Zeus?

Beware, lest thine own pity find thee
out.

Hephaestus. Thou dost behold a
spectacle that turns

The sight o' the eyes to pity.

Strength. I behold
A sinner suffer his sin's penalty.

But lash the thongs about his sides.
Hephaestus. So much

I must do. Urgen farther than I must.

Strength. Ay, but I will urge!—
and, with shout on shout,

Will hound thee at this quarry! Get
thee down!

And ring amain the iron round his
legs!

Hephaestus. That work was not
long doing.

Strength. Heavily now
Let fall the strokes upon the perform-
ant gyves!

For He who rates the work has a
heavy hand.

Hephaestus. Thy speech is savage
as thy shape.

Strength. Be thou
Gentle and tender! but revile not me

For the firm will and the untrucking
hate.

Hephaestus. Let us go! He is
netted round with chains.

Strength. Here now, taunt on!
and, having spoiled the gods

Of honours, crown withal thy mortal
men

Who live a whole day out! Why,
how could they

Draw off from thee one single of thy
griefs?

Methinks the Dæmons gave thee a wrong name,

Prometheus, which means Providence,—because

Thou dost thyself need providence to see,

Thy roll and ruin from the top of doom.

Prometheus (alone). Oholy Æther, and swift-winged Winds,

And River-wells, and laughter innumerable

Of yon Sea-waves! Earth, mother of us all,

And all-viewing cyclic Sun, I cry on you!—

Behold me, a god, what I endure from gods!

Behold, with throe on throe, How, wasted by this woe,

I wrestle down the myriad years of Time!

Behold, how, fast around me, The new King of the happy ones sublime

Has flung the chain he forged, has shamed and bound me!

Woe, woe! to-day's woe and the coming morrow's,

I cover with one groan! And where is found me

A limit to these sorrows?

And yet what word do I say? I have foreknown

Clearly all things that should be—nothing done,

Comes sudden to my soul—and I must bear

What is ordained with patience, being aware

Necessity doth front the universe With an invincible gesture. Yet

this curse

Which strikes me now, I find it hard to brave

In silence or in speech. Because I gave Honour to mortals, I have yoked my soul

To this compelling fate! Because I stole

The secret fount of fire, whose bubbles went

Over the ferule's brim, and manward sent

Art's mighty means and perfect rudiment,

That sin I expiate in this agony,

Hung here in fetters, 'neath the blanching sky!

Ah, ah me! what a sound,

What a fragrance sweeps up from a pinion unseen

Of a god, or a mortal, or nature between,—

Sweeping up to this rock where the earth has her bound,

To have sight of my pangs,—or some guerdon obtain—

Lo! a god in the anguish, a god in the chain!

The god, Zeus hateth sore,

And his gods hate again,

As many as trod on his glorified floor,—

Because I loved mortals too much evermore!

Alas me! what a murmur and motion I hear,

As of birds flying near!

And the air undersings

The light stroke of their wings—

And all life that approaches, I wait for in fear.

Chorus of Sea Nymphs, 1st Strophe.

Fear nothing! our troop

Floats lovingly up,

With a quick-oaring stroke

Of wings steered to the rock,

Having softened the soul of our father below!

For the gales of swift-bearing have sent me a sound,—

And the clank of the iron, the malleted blow,

Smote down the profound

Of my caverns of old,

And struck the red light in a blush from my brow,—

Till I sprang up unsaddled, in haste to behold,

And rushed forth on my chariot of wings manifold.

Prometheus. Alas me!—alas me!

Ye offspring of Tethys, who bore at her breast

Many children, and eke of Oceanus,—he,

Coiling still around earth with perpetual unrest!

Behold me and see

How transfixed with the fang

Of a fetter, I hang

On the high-jutting rocks of this
fissure, and keep
An uncoveted watch o'er the world
and the deep.

Chorus, 1st Antistrophe.

I behold thee, Prometheus—yet now,
yet now,

A terrible cloud, whose rain is tears,
Sweeps over mine eyes that witness
how

Thy body appears
Hung awaste on the rocks by infran-
gible chains!

For new is the hand and the rudder
that steers

The ship of Olympus through surge
and wind—

And of old things passed, no track is
behind.

Prometheus. Under earth, under
Hades,

Where the home of the shade is,
All into the deep, deep Tartarus,

I would he had hurled me adown!
I would he had plunged me, fastened
thus

In the knotted chain, with the sav-
age clang,

All into the dark, where there should
be none,

Neither god nor another, to laugh
and see!

But now the winds sing through
and shake

The huriling chains wherein I
hang,—

And I, in my naked sorrows, make
much

Much mirth for my enemy.

Chorus, 2nd Strophe.

Nay! who of the gods hath a heart
so stern,

As to use thy woe for a mock and
mirth?

Who would not turn more mild to
learn

Thy sorrows? who of the heaven
and earth

Save Zeus? But he

Right wrathfully

Bears on his sceptral soul un-
bent,

And rules thereby the heavenly
seed,

Nor will he cease, till he content
His thirsty heart in a finished
deed;

Or till Another shall appear,
To win by fraud, to seize by fear
The hard to be captured govern-
ment.

Prometheus. Yet even of me he
shall have need,

That monarch of the blessed
seed;

Of me, of me, who now am
cursed

Beneath his fetters dire,—

To wring my secret out withal,
And learn by whom his sceptre
shall

Be filched from him—as was, at
first,

His heavenly fire!

But he never shall enchant me
With his honey-lipped per-
suasion,

Never, never shall he daunt me
With the oath and threat of
passion,

Into speaking as they want me,
Till he loose this savage chain,

And accept the expiation
Of my sorrow, by his pain.

Chorus, 2nd Antistrophe.

Thou art, sooth, a brave god,
And, for all thou hast borne

From the stroke of the rod,
Nought relaxest from scorn!

But thou speakest unto me
Too free and unworn—

And a terror strikes through me,
And festers my soul,

And I fear, in the roll

Of the storm, for thy fate

In the ship far from shore—

Since the son of Saturnius is hard in
his hate,

And unmoved in his heart ever-
more.

Prometheus. I know that Zeus is
stern!

I know he metes his justice by his
will!

And yet, his soul shall learn

More softness when once broken by
this ill,

And, curbing his unconquerable
vaunt,
He shall rush on in fear, to meet with
me

Who rush to meet with him in agony,
To issues of harmonious covenant.

Chorus. Remove the veil from all
things and relate
The story to us!—of what crime
accused,

Zeus smites thee with dishonourable
pangs.

Speak! if to teach us do not grieve
thyself.

Prometheus. The utterance of
these things is torture to me,
But so, too, is their silence! each
way lies

Woe strong as fate!—
When gods began with wrath,
And war rose up between their starry
brows,—

Some choosing to cast Chronos from
his throne

That Zeus might king it there, and
some in haste

With opposite oaths that they would
have no Zeus

To rule the gods for ever,—I, who
brought

The counsel I thought meetest, could
not move

The Titans, children of the Heaven
and Earth,—

What time, disdainful in their rugged
souls

My sublimachinations, they assumed
It was an easy thing for force to take

The mastery of fate. My mother,
then,

Who is called not only Themis but
Earth too

(Her single beauty joys in many
names),

Did teach me with reiterant prophecy
What future should be,—and how

conquering gods
Should not prevail by strength and

violence,
But by guile only. When I told them
so,

They would not deign to contem-
plate the truth

On all sides round,—whereat I deemed
it best.

To lead my willing mother upwardly,
And set my Themis face to face with
Zeus,

As willing to receive her! Tartarus,
With its abysmal cloister of the Dark,
Because I gave that counsel, covers up
The antique Chronos and his siding
hosts;

And, by that counsel helped, the king
of gods

Hath recompensed me by these bitter
pangs!

For kingship wears a cancer at the
heart,—

Distrust in friendship. Do ye also
ask

What crime it is for which he tortures
me—

It shall be clear before you. When
at first

He filled his father's throne, he in-
stantly

Made various gifts of glory to the gods,
And dealt the empire out. Alone

of men,
Of miserable men, he took no count,

But yearned to sweep their track
off from the world,

And plant a newer race there! Not
a god

Resisted that desire except myself!
I dared it! I drew mortals back to

light,
From meditated ruin deep as hell!—

For which wrong, I am bent down in
these pangs,

Dreadful to suffer, mournful to be-
hold,—

And I, who pitied man, am thought
myself

Unworthy of pity,—while I render out
Deep rhythms of anguish 'neath the

harping hand
That strikes me thus!—a sight to

shame your Zeus!

Chorus. Hard as thy chains, and
cold as all these rocks,

Is he, Prometheus, who withholds
his heart

From joining in thy woe. I yearned
before

To fly this sight—and, now I gaze
on it,

I sicken inwards.
Prometheus. To my friends, in-
deed,

I must be a sad sight.

Chorus. And didst thou sin
No more than so?

Prometheus. I did restrain be-
sides
My mortals from premeditating
death.

Chorus. How didst thou medi-
cine the plague-fear of death?

Prometheus. I set blind Hopes to
inhabit in their house.

Chorus. By that gift, thou didst
help thy mortals well.

Prometheus. I gave them also,—
fire.

Chorus. And have they now,
Those creatures of a day, the red-
eyed fire?

Prometheus. They have! and shall
learn by it, many arts.

Chorus. And, truly, for such sins
Zeus tortures thee,
And will remit no anguish? Is there
set

No limit before thee to thine agony?

Prometheus. No other! only what
seems good to him.

Chorus. And how will it seem
good? what hope remains?
Seest thou not that thou hast sinned?

But that thou hast sinned
It glads me not to speak of, and
grieves thee—

Then let it pass from both! and
seek thyself

Some outlet from despair.

Prometheus. It is in truth
An easy thing to stand aloof from
pain

And lavish exhortation and advice
On one vexed sorely by it. I have
known

All in prevision!—By my choice, my
choice,

I freely sinned—I will confess my
sin—

And helping mortals, found mine
own despair!—

I did not think indeed that I should
pine

Beneath such pangs against such
skyey rocks,—

Doomed to this drear hill and no
neighbouring

Of any life!—but mourn not ye for
griefs

I bear to-day!—hear rather, drop-
ping down

To the plain, how other woes creep
on to me,

And learn the consummation of my
doom.

Beseech you, nymphs, beseech you!
—grieve for me

Who am now grieving!—for Grief
walks the earth,

And sits down at the foot of each by
turns.

Chorus. We hear the deep clash
of thy words,

Prometheus, and obey!
And I spring with a rapid foot
away

From the rushing car and the holy
air

The track of birds—
And I drop to the rugged ground
and there

Await the tale of thy despair.

Enter OCEANUS.

Oceanus. I reach the bourne of
my weary road

Where I may see and answer
thee,

Prometheus, in thine agony!
On the back of the quick-winged
bird I glode,

And I bridled him in
With the will of a god!

Behold, thy sorrow aches in me,
Constrained by the force of
kin,—

Nay, though that tie were all
undone,

For the life of none beneath the
sun,

Would I seek a larger benison
Than I seek for thine!—

And thou shalt learn my words
are truth,—

That no fair parlance of the
mouth

Grows falsely out of mine.
Now give me a deed to prove my
faith,—

For no faster friend is named in
breath

Than I, *Oceanus,* am thine.

Prometheus. Ha! what has brought
thee? Hast thou also come

'o look upon my woe? How hast
 thou dared
 'o leave the depths called after
 thee, the caves
 elf-hewn and self-roofed with spon-
 taneous rock,
 'o visit earth, the mother of my
 chain?
 Iast come indeed to view my doom
 and mourn
 That I should sorrow thus? Gaze
 on, and see
 How I, the fast friend of your Zeus,
 —how I,
 The erector of the empire in his
 hand,—
 Am bent beneath that hand, in this
 despair!
Oceanus. Prometheus, I behold,—
 and I would fain.
 Exhort thee, though already subtle
 enough,
 To a better wisdom. Titan, know
 thyself,
 And take new softness to thy manners
 since
 A new king rules the gods. If words
 like these,
 Harsh words and trenchant, thou
 wilt fling abroad,
 Zeus haply, though he sit so far and
 high,
 May hear thee do it, and, so, this
 wrath of his,
 Which now affects thee fiercely, shall
 appear
 A mere child's sport at vengeance!
 Wretched god,
 Rather dismiss the passion which
 thou hast,
 And seek a change from grief. Per-
 haps I seem
 To address thee with old saws and
 outworn sense,—
 Yet such a curse, Prometheus, surely
 waits
 On lips that speak too proudly!—
 thou, meantime,
 Art none the meeker, nor dost yield
 a jot
 To evil circumstance,—preparing
 still
 To swell the account of grief with
 other griefs
 Than what are borne! Beseech thee,
 use me then

For counsel! Do not spurn against
 the pricks,—
 Seeing that who reigns, reigns by
 cruelty,
 Instead of right. And now, I go
 from hence,
 And will endeavour if a power of
 mine
 Can break thy fetters through. For
 thee,—be calm,
 And smooth thy words from passion.
 Knowest thou not
 Of perfect knowledge, thou who
 knowest too much,
 That where the tongue wags, ruin
 never lags?
Prometheus. I gratulate thee, who
 hast shared and dared
 All things with me, except their
 penalty!
 Enough so! leave these thoughts! It
 cannot be
 That thou shouldst move Him. He
 may not be moved!
 And thou, beware of sorrow on this
 road!
Oceanus. Ay! ever wiser for an-
 other's use
 Than thine! the event, and not the
 prophecy,
 Attests it to me. Yet where now I
 rush,
 Thy wisdom hath no power to drag
 me back;
 Because I glory—glory, to go hence
 To win for thee deliverance from thy
 pangs,
 As a free gift from Zeus.
Prometheus. Why there, again,
 I give thee gratulation and applause!
 Thou lackest no good will. But, as
 for deeds,
 Do nought! 'twere all done vainly!
 helping nought,
 Whatever thou wouldst do. Rather
 take rest,
 And keep thyself from evil. If I
 grieve,
 I do not therefore wish to multiply
 The griefs of others. Verily, not so!
 For still my brother's doom doth
 vex my soul,—
 My brother Atlas, standing in the
 west,
 Shouldering the column of the heaven
 and earth,

A difficult burden! I have also
 seen,
 And pitied as I saw, the earth-born
 one,
 The habitant of old Cilician caves,
 The great war-monster of the hundred
 heads,
 (All taken and bowed beneath the
 violent Hand),
 Typhon the fierce, who did resist the
 gods,
 And, hissing slaughter from his dread-
 ful jaws,
 Did flash ferocious glory from his
 eyes,
 As if to storm the throne of Zeus!
 Whereat,
 The sleepless arrow of Zeus flew
 straight at him,—
 The headlong bolt of thunder breath-
 ing flame,
 And struck him downward from his
 eminence
 Of exultation! Through the very
 soul
 It struck him, and his strength was
 withered up
 To ashes, thunder-blasted. Now,
 he lies
 A helpless trunk supinely, at full
 length,
 Beside the strait of ocean, spurred
 into
 By roots of Ætna,—high upon whose
 tops
 Hephaestus sits and strikes the flash-
 ing ore!
 From thence the rivers of fire shall
 burst away
 Hereafter, and devour with savage
 jaws
 The equal plains of fruitful Sicily,—
 Such passion he shall boil back in
 hot darts
 Of an insatiate fury and sough of
 flame,—
 Fallen Typhon,—howsoever struck
 and charred
 By Zeus's bolted thunder! But for
 thee,
 Thou art not so unlearned as to need
 My teaching—let thy knowledge save
 thyself.
 I quaff the full cup of a present doom,
 And wait till Zeus hath quenched
 his will in wrath.

Oceanus. Prometheus, art thou
 ignorant of this,—

That words do medicine anger?

Prometheus. If the word
 With seasonable softness touch the
 soul,

And, where the parts are ulcerous,
 sear them not

With any rudeness.

Oceanus. With a noble aim
 To dare as nobly—is there harm in
 that?

Dost thou discern it? Teach me.

Prometheus. I discern
 Vain aspiration,—unresultive work.

Oceanus. Then suffer me to bear
 the brunt of this!

Since it is profitable that one who is
 wise

Should seem not wise at all.

Prometheus. And such would seem
 My very crime.

Oceanus. In truth, thine argument
 Sends me back home.

Prometheus. Lest any lament for
 me

Should cast thee down to hate.

Oceanus. The hate of Him,
 Who sits a new king on the absolute
 throne?

Prometheus. Beware of him,—
 lest thine heart grieve by him.

Oceanus. Thy doom, Prometheus,
 be my teacher!

Prometheus. Go!
 Depart—beware!—and keep the
 mind thou hast.

Oceanus. Thy words drive after, as
 I rush before—

Lo! my four-footed Bird sweeps
 smooth and wide

The flats of air with balanced pinions
 glad

To bend his knee at home, in the
 ocean-stall.

[Exit OCEANUS.]

1st Strophe.

I moan thy fate, I moan for thee,
 Prometheus! From my eyes too
 tender,

Drop after drop incessantly,

The tears of my heart's pity render
 My cheeks wet from their fountains
 free,—

Because that Zeus, the stern and cold,

Whose law is taken from his
breast,
Uplifts his sceptre manifest
Over the gods of old.

1st Antistrophe.

All the land is moaning
With a murmured plaint to-day!
All the mortal nations,
Having habitations
In the holy Asia,
Are a dirge intoning
For thine honour and thy brother's,
Once majestic beyond others
In the old belief,—
Now are groaning in the groaning
Of thy deep-voiced grief.

2nd Strophe.

Mourn the maids inhabitant
Of the Colchian land,
Who with white, calm bosoms, stand
In the battle's roar!
Mourn the Scythian tribes that haunt
The verge of earth, Mæotis' shore.

2nd Antistrophe.

And Arabia's battle crown,
And dwellers in the beetling town
Mount Caucasus sublimely nears,—
An iron squadron, thundering down
With the sharp-prowed spears.

But one other before, have I seen
to remain,

By invincible pain
Bound and vanquished,—one Titan!
—'twas Atlas, who bears
In a curse from the gods, by that
strength of his own

Which he evermore wears,
The weight of the heaven on his
shoulder alone,

While he sighs up the stars!
And the tides of ocean wail, bursting
their bars,—

Murmurs stir the profound,—
And black Hades roars up through
the chasm of the ground,—
And the fountains of pure-running
rivers moan low

In a pathos of woe.

Prometheus. Beseech you, think
not I am silent thus
Through pride or scorn! I only
gnaw my heart

With meditation, seeing myself so
wronged!

For so—their honours to these new-
made gods,

What other gave, but I,—and dealt
them out

With distribution? Ay—but here I
am dumb!

For here, I should repeat your know-
ledge to you,

If I spake aught. List rather to
the deeds

I did for mortals!—how, being fools
before,

I made them wise and true in aim of
soul!—

And let me tell you—not as taunting
men,

But teaching you the intention of my
gifts,

How, first beholding, they beheld in
vain,

And hearing, heard not, but, like
shapes in dreams,

Mixed all things wildly down the
tedious time,

Nor knew to build a house against
the sun,

With wicketed sides, nor any wood-
craft knew,

But lived, like silly ants, beneath
the ground

In hollow caves unsunned. There,
came to them

No steadfast sign of winter, nor of
spring

Flower-perfumed, nor of summer
full of fruit,—

But blindly and lawlessly they did
all things

Until I taught them how the stars do
rise

And set in mystery,—and devised for
them

Number, the inducer of philosophies,
The synthesis of Letters, and, beside,

The artificer of all things, Memory,
That sweet Muse-mother. I was

first to yoke
The servile beasts in couples, carrying

An heirdom of man's burdens on
their backs!

I joined to chariots, steeds, that love
the bit

They champ at—the chief pomp of
golden ease!

And none but I, originated ships,
The seaman's chariots, wandering
on the brine
With linen wings! And I—oh,
miserable!—

Who did devise for mortals all these
arts,

Have no device left now to save
myself

From the woe I suffer!

Chorus. Most unseemly woe
Thou sufferest, and dost stagger from
the sense,
Bewildered! Like a bad leech falling
sick

Thou art faint at soul, and canst not
find the drugs

Required to save thyself.

Prometheus. Harken the rest,
And marvel further—what more arts
and means

I did invent,—this, greatest!—if a
man

Fell sick, there was no cure, nor escu-
lent;

Nor chrism, nor liquid, but for lack
of drugs

Men pined and wasted, till I showed
to them

Those mixtures of emollient remedies
Whereby they might be rescued from
disease.

I fixed the various rules of mantic art,
Discerned the vision from the com-
mon dream,—

Instructed them in vocal auguries
Hard to interpret, and defined as
plain

The wayside omens,—flights of crook-
clawed birds,—

Showed which are, by their nature,
fortunate,

And which not so, and what the
food of each,

And what the hates, affections, social
needs,

Of all to one another,—taught what
sign

Of visceral lightness, coloured to a
shade,

May charm the genial gods, and what
fair spots

Commend the lung and liver. Burn-
ing so

The limbs encased in fat, and the long
chine,

I led my mortals on to an art abstruse,
And cleared their eyes to the image
in the fire,

Erst filmed in dark. Enough said
now of this.

For the other helps of man hid under-
ground,

The iron and the brass, silver and gold,
Can any dare affirm he found them
out

Before me? None, I know! Unless
he choose

To lie in his vaunt. In one word
learn the whole,

That all arts came to mortals from
Prometheus.

Chorus. Give mortals now no in-
expedient help,

Neglecting thine own sorrow! I have
hope still

To see thee, breaking from the fetter
here,

Stand up as strong as Zeus.

Prometheus. This ends not thus,
The oracular Fate ordains. I must
be bowed

By infinite woes and pangs, to escape
this chain.

Necessity is stronger than mine art.

Chorus. Who holds the helm of
that Necessity?

Prometheus. The threefold Fates
and the unforgetting Furies.

Chorus. Is Zeus less absolute
than these are?

Prometheus. Yea,
And therefore cannot fly what is
ordained.

Chorus. What is ordained for
Zeus, except to be

A king for ever?

Prometheus. 'Tis too early yet
For thee to learn it: ask no more.

Chorus. Perhaps
Thy secret may be something holy?

Prometheus. Turn
To another matter! this, it is not time

To speak abroad, but utterly to veil
In silence. For by that same secret

kept,
I 'scape this chain's dishonour, and
its woe.

Chorus, 1st Strophe.

Never, oh never,
May Zeus, the all-giver,

Wrestle down from his throne,
 In that might of his own,
 To antagonise mine!
 Nor let me delay
 As I bend on my way
 Toward the gods of the shrine,
 Where the altar is full
 Of the blood of the bull,
 Near the tossing brine
 Of Ocean my father!
 May no sin be sped in the word
 that is said,
 But my vow, be it rather
 Consummated,
 Nor evermore fail, nor evermore
 pine.

1st Antistrophe.

'Tis sweet to have
 Life lengthened out
 With hopes proved brave
 By the very doubt,
 Till the spirit enfold
 Those manifest joys which were
 foretold!
 But I thrill to behold
 Thee, victim doomed,
 By the countless cares
 And the drear despairs,
 For ever consumed,—
 And all because thou, who art fearless
 now,
 Of Zeus above,
 Dost overflow for mankind below
 With a free-souled, reverent love.
 Ah! friend, behold and see!
 What's all the beauty of humanity?
 Can it be fair?
 What's all the strength?—is it strong?
 And what hope can they bear,
 These dying livers—living one day
 long?
 Ah, seest thou not, my friend,
 How feeble and slow
 And like a dream, doth go
 This poor blind manhood, drifted
 from its end?
 And how no mortal wranglings
 can confuse
 The harmony of Zeus?
 Prometheus, I have learnt these
 things,
 From the sorrow in thy face!
 Another song did drop its
 wings
 Upon my lips in other days

When round the bath and
 round the bed
 The hymeneal chant instead
 I sang for thee, and smiled,—
 And thou didst lead, with gifts
 and vows,
 Hesione, my father's child,
 To be thy wedded spouse.

Io enters.

Io. What land is this? what
 people is here?
 And who is he that writhes, I see,
 In the rock-hung chain?
 Now, what is the crime that hath
 brought thee to pain?
 And what is the land—make answer
 free—
 Which I wander through, in my
 wrong and fear?—
 Ah! ah! ah me!
 The gad-fly stingeth to agony!
 O Earth, keep off that phantasm pale
 Of earth-born Argus!—ah!—I quail
 When my soul describes
 That herdsman with the myriad eyes
 Which seem, as he comes, one crafty
 eye!
 Graves hide him not, though he
 should die,—
 But he doggeth me in my misery
 From the roots of death, on high—on
 high—
 And along the sands of the siding
 deep,
 All famine-worn, he follows me,
 And his waxen reed doth undersound
 The waters round,
 And giveth a measure that giveth
 sleep.

Woe, woe, woe!
 Where shall my weary course be
 done?—
 What wouldst thou with me, Saturn's
 son?
 And in what have I sinned, that I
 should go
 Thus yoked to grief by thine hand for
 ever?
 Ah! ah! dost vex me so,
 That I madden and shiver,
 Stung through with dread?
 Flash the fire down, to burn
 me!
 Heave the earth up, to cover
 me!

Or plunge me in the deep, with the
salt waves over me,
That the sea-beasts may be fed!
O king, do not spurn me
In my prayer!

For this wandering, everlonger,
evermore,

Hath overworn me,—
And I know not on what shore
I may rest from my despair.

Chorus. Hearest thou what the
ox-horned maiden saith?

Prometheus. How could I choose
but harken what she saith,
The frenzied maiden?—Inachus's
child?—

Who love-warms Zeus's heart, and
now is lashed

By Heré's hate along the unending
ways?

Io. Who taught thee to articulate
that name,—

My father's? Speak to his
child,

By grief and shame defiled!

Who art thou, victim, thou—who
dost acclaim

Mine anguish in true words, on the
wide air?

And callest too by name the curse
that came

From Heré unaware,
To waste and pierce me with its
maddening goad.

Ah—ah—I leap
With the pang of the hungry—I
bound on the road—

I am driven by my doom—
I am overcome

By the wrath of an enemy strong and
deep!

Are any of those who have tasted
pain,

Alas!—wretched as I?

Now tell me plain, doth aught re-
main

For my soul to endure beneath the
sky?

Is there any help to be holpen by?
If knowledge be in thee, let it be
said—

Cry aloud—cry
To the wandering, woeful maid.

Prometheus. Whatever thou wouldst
learn, I will declare,—

No riddle upon my lips, but such
straight words

As friends should use to each other
when they talk.

Thou seest Prometheus, who gave
mortals fire!

Io. O common Help of all men,
known of all,

O miserable Prometheus,—for what
cause

Dost thou endure thus?

Prometheus. I have done with wail
For my own griefs—but lately.

Io. Wilt thou not
Vouchsafe the boon to me?

Prometheus. Say what thou wilt,
For I vouchsafe all.

Io. Speak, then, and reveal
Who shut thee in this chasm.

Prometheus. The will of Zeus,
The hand of his Hephestus.

Io. And what crime,
Dost expiate so?

Prometheus. Enough for thee I
have told,

In so much only.

Io. Nay—but show besides
The limit of my wandering, and the
time

Which yet is lacking to fulfil my
grief.

Prometheus. Why, not to know
were better than to know,

For such as thou.

Io. Beseech thee, blind me not
To that which I must suffer.

Prometheus. If I do,
The reason is not that I grudge a
boon.

Io. What reason, then, prevents
thy speaking out?

Prometheus. No grudging! but a
fear to break thine heart.

Io. Less care for me, I pray thee!
Certainty,

I count for advantage.

Prometheus. Thou wilt have it so,
And, therefore, I must speak. Now
hear—

Chorus. Not yet!
Give half the guerdon my way.

Let us learn
First, what the curse is that befel the
maid,—

Her own voice telling her own wast-
ing woes!—

The sequence of that anguish shall
await

The teaching of thy lips.

Prometheus. It doth behove
That thou, maid Io, should vouch-
safe to these

The grace they pray,—the more, be-
cause they are called

Thy father's sisters ! since to open out
And mourn out grief where it is
possible

To draw a tear from the audience, is a
work

That pays its own price well.

Io. I cannot choose
But trust you, nymphs, and tell you
all ye ask,

In clear words—though I sob amid
my speech

In speaking of the storm-curse sent
from Zeus,

And of my beauty, from which
height it took

Its swoop on me, poor wretch !
left thus deformed,

And monstrous to your eyes. For
evermore

Around my virgin-chamber, wander-
ing went

The nightly visions which entreated
me

With syllabled smooth sweetness.—
“Blessed maid,

Why lengthen out thy maiden hours,
when fate

Permits the noblest spousal in the
world ?

When Zeus burns with the arrow of
thy love,

And fain would touch thy beauty?—
Maiden, thou

Despise not Zeus ! depart to Lerne's
mead,

That's green around thy father's
flocks and stalls,

Until the passion of the heavenly Eye
Be quenched in sight.” Such dreams
did all night long

Constrain me—me, unhappy !—till I
dared

To tell my father how they trod the
dark

With visionary steps ; whereat he sent
His frequent heralds to the Pythian
fane,

And also to Dodona, and inquired

How best, by act or speech, to please
the gods,

The same returning, brought back
oracles

Of doubtful sense, indefinite response,
Dark to interpret. Then, at last
there came

To Inachus an answer that was
clear,—

Thrown straight as any bolt, and
spoken out—

This—“He should drive me from
my home and land,

And bid me wander to the extreme
verge

Of all the earth—or, if he willed it not,
Should have a thunder with a fiery
eye,

Leap straight from Zeus to burn up
all his race,

To the last root of it.” By which
Loxian word,

Subdued, he drove me forth, and shut
me out,

He loth, me loth,—but Zeus's violent
bit

Compelled him to the deed !—When
instantly

My body and soul were changed and
distraught,

And, horned as ye see, and spurred
along

By the fanged insect, with a maniac
leap

I rushed on to Cenchrea's limpid
stream,

And Lerne's fountain-water. There,
the earth-born,

The herdsman Argus, most immitig-
able

Of wrath, did find me out, and track
me out

With countless eyes, set staring at my
steps !—

And though an unexpected sudden
doom

Drew him from life—I—curse-
tormented still,

Am driven from land to land before
the scourge

The gods hold o'er me. So, thou
hast heard the past,

And if a bitter future thou canst
tell,

Speak on ! I charge t'hee, do not
flatter me

Through pity, with false words ! for,
 in my mind,
 Deceiving works more shame than
 torturing doth.

Chorus.

Ah ! silence here !
 Nevermore, nevermore,
 Would I languish for
 The stranger's word
 To thrill in mine ear !—
 Nevermore for the wrong and the
 woe and the fear
 So hard to behold,
 And so hard to bear,
 Piercing my soul with a double-
 edged sword
 Of a sliding cold !
 Ah Fate !—ah me !—
 I shudder to see
 This wandering maid in her agony.

Prometheus. Grief is too quick in
 thee, and fear too full !
 Be patient till thou hast learned the
 rest !

Chorus. Speak—teach !—
 To those who are sad already, it
 seems sweet,
 By clear foreknowledge to make
 perfect, pain.

Prometheus. The boon ye asked
 me first was lightly won,—
 For first ye asked the story of this
 maid's grief
 As her own lips might tell it—Now
 remains
 To list what other sorrows she so
 young
 Must bear from Heré !—Inachus's
 child,
 O thou !—drop down thy soul, my
 weighty words,
 And measure out the landmarks
 which are set
 To end thy wandering ! Toward the
 orient sun
 First turn thy face from mine, and
 journey on
 Along the desert flats, till thou shalt
 come
 Where Scythia's shepherd peoples
 dwell aloft,
 Perched in wheeled waggons under
 woven roofs,

And twang the rapid arrow past the
 bow—
 Approach them not ; but siding in
 thy course,
 The rugged shore-rocks resonant to
 the sea,
 Depart that country. On the left
 hand dwell
 The iron-workers, called the Chalybes,
 Of whom beware ! for certes they are
 uncouth,
 And nowise bland to strangers.
 Reaching so
 The stream Hybristes (well the *scorner*
 called),
 Attempt no passage,—it is hard to
 pass,—
 Or ere thou come to Caucasus itself,
 That highest of mountains,—where
 the river leaps
 The precipice in his strength !—thou
 must toil up
 Those mountain-tops that neighbour
 with the stars,
 And tread the south way, and draw
 near, at last,
 The Amazonian host that hateth
 man,
 Inhabitants of Themiscyra, close
 Upon Thermodon, where the sea's
 rough jaw
 Doth gnash at Salmydessa and pro-
 vide
 A cruel host to seamen, and to ships
 A stepdame ! They with unreluc-
 tant hand
 Shall lead thee on and on, till thou
 arrive
 Just where the ocean-gates show
 narrowest
 On the Cimmerian isthmus. Leaving
 which,
 Behoves thee swim with fortitude
 of soul
 The strait Mæotis. Ay ! and ever-
 more
 That traverse shall be famous on
 men's lips,
 That strait called Bosphorus, the
 horned one's road,
 So named because of thee !—who so
 wilt pass
 From Europe's plain to Asia's conti-
 nent.
 How think ye, nymphs ? the king of
 gods appears

Impartial in ferocious deeds? Behold!

The god desirous of this mortal's love
Hath cursed her with these wanderings. Ah, fair child,

Thou hast met a bitter groom for
bridal troth!

For all thou yet hast heard, can only
prove

The incomplete prelude of thy doom.

Io. Ah, ah!

Prometheus. Is't thy turn, now,
to shriek and moan?

How wilt thou, when thou hast harkened
what remains?

Chorus. Besides the grief thou
hast told, can aught remain?

Prometheus. A sea—of fore-
doomed evil worked to storm.

Io. What boots my life, then?
why not cast myself

Down headlong from this miserable
rock,

That, dashed against the flats, I may
redeem

My soul from sorrow? Better once
to die,

Than day by day to suffer.

Prometheus. Verily,
It would be hard for thee to bear my
woe,

For whom it is appointed not to die.
Death frees from woe: but I before
me see

In all my far prevision, not a bound
To all I suffer, ere that Zeus shall
fall

From being a king.

Io. And can it ever be
That Zeus shall fall from empire?

Prometheus. Thou, methinks,
Wouldst take some joy to see it.

Io. Could I choose?
I, who endure such pangs, now, by
that God!

Prometheus. Learn from me,
therefore, that the event shall be.

Io. By whom shall his imperial
sceptred hand

Be emptied so?

Prometheus. Himself shall spoil
himself,

Through his idiotic counsels.

Io. How? declare;
Unless the word bring evil.

Prometheus. He shall wed—

And in the marriage-bond be joined
to grief.

Io. A heavenly bride—or human?
Speak it out,

If it be utterable.

Prometheus. Why should I say
which?

It ought not to be uttered, verily.
Io. Then

It is his wife shall tear him from his
throne?

Prometheus. It is his wife shall
bear a son to him,

More mighty than the father.

Io. From this doom

Hath he no refuge?

Prometheus. None—or ere that I
Loosed from these fetters—

Io. Yea—but who shall loose,
While Zeus is adverse?

Prometheus. One who is born of
thee,—

It is ordained so.

Io. What is this thou sayest?

A son of mine shall liberate thee from
woe?

Prometheus. After ten generations,
count three more,

And find him in the third.

Io. The oracle

Remains obscure.

Prometheus. And search it not, to
learn

Thine own griefs from it.

Io. Point me not to a good,
To leave me straight bereaved.

Prometheus. I am prepared
To grant thee one of two things.

Io. But which two?
Set them before me—grant me power
to choose.

Prometheus. I grant it—choose
now—shall I name aloud

What griefs remain to wound thee, or
what hand

Shall save me out of mine?

Chorus. Vouchsafe, O god,

The one grace of the twain to her
who prays,

The next to me—and turn back
neither prayer

Dishonoured by denial. To herself
Recount the future wandering of
her feet—

Then point me to the looser of thy
chain—

Because I yearn to know him.

Prometheus. Since ye will,
Of absolute will, this knowledge, I
will set
No contrary against it, nor keep
back

A word of all ye ask for. Io, first
To thee I must relate thy wandering
course
Far winding. As I tell it, write it
down

In thy soul's book of memories.
When thou hast past
The reflowing bound that parts two
continents,

Track on the footsteps of the orient
sun

In his own fire—across the roar of
seas,

Fly till thou hast reached the Gor-
gonæan flats

Beside Cisthene. There the Phorides,
Three ancient maidens, live, with
shape of swan,

One tooth between them, and one
common eye,

On whom the sun doth never look at
all

With all his rays, nor evermore the
moon,

When she looks through the night!
Anear to whom

Are the Gorgon sisters three, en-
clothed with wings,

With twisted snakes for ringlets,—
man-abhorred—

There is no mortal gazes in their
face,

And gazing can breathe on. I speak
of such

To guard thee from their horror. Ay!
and list

Another tale of a dreadful sight!
beware

The Griffins, those unbarking dogs of
Zeus,

Those sharp-mouthed dogs!—and the
Arimaspians host

Of one-eyed horsemen, habiting
beside

The river of Pluto that runs bright
with gold.

Approach them not, beseech thee.
Presently

Thou'lt come to a distant land, a
dusky tribe

Of dwellers at the fountain of the Sun,
Whence flows the river Æthiops!—
wind along

Its banks and turn off at the cataracts,
Just as the Nile pours, from the
Bybline hills,

His holy and sweet wave!—his
course shall guide

Thine own to that triangular Nile-
ground,

Where, Io, is ordained for thee and
thine

A lengthened exile. Have I said, in this
Aught darkly or incompletely?—
now repeat

The question, make the knowledge
fuller! Lo,

I have more leisure than I covet, here.

Chorus. If thou canst tell us
aught that's left untold

Or loosely told of her most dreary
flight,

Declare it straight! but if thou hast
uttered all,

Grant us that latter grace for which
we prayed,

Remembering how we prayed it.

Prometheus. She has heard,
The uttermost of her wandering.
There it ends.

But that she may be certain not
to have heard

All vainly, I will speak what she en-
dured

Ere coming hither, and invoke the past
To prove my prescience true. And
so—to leave

A multitude of words, and pass at
once

To the subject of thy course!—When
thou hadst gone

To those Molossian plains which
sweep around

Dodona shouldering Heaven, whereat
the fane

Of Zeus Thesprotian keepeth oracle,
And, wonder past belief, where oaks
do wave

Articulate adjurations—ay, the same
Saluted thee in no perplexed phrase,
But clear with glory, noble wife of
Zeus

Who shouldst be (there, some sweet-
ness took thy sense!)

Thou didst rush further onward,—
stung along

The ocean-shore,—toward Rhea's
mighty bay,—
And, tost back from it, wert tost to
it again
In stormy evolution!—and, know
well,
In coming time that hollow of the sea
Shall bear the name Ionian, and
present
A monument of Io's passage through,
Unto all mortals. Be these words
the signs
Of my soul's power to look beyond
the veil
Of visible things. The rest, to you
and her,
I will declare in common audience,
nymphs,
Returning thither where my speech
brake off.
There is a town Canopus, built upon
The earth's far margin, at the mouth
of Nile,
And on the mound washed up by
it!—Io, there
Shall Zeus give back to thee thy
perfect mind,
And only by the pressure and the touch
Of a hand not terrible! and thou
to Zeus
Shalt bear a dusky son, who shall be
called
Thence, Epaphus, Touched! That son
shall pluck the fruit
Of all that land wide-watered by
the flow
Of Nile!—but after him, when count-
ing out
As far as the fifth full generation,—
then
Full fifty maidens, a fair woman-race,
Shall back to Argos turn reluctantly,
To fly the proffered nuptials of their
kin,
Their father's brother's. These being
passion-struck,
Like falcons bearing hard on flying
doves,
Shall follow, hunting at a quarry
of love
They should not hunt—till envious
Heaven maintain
A curse betwixt that beauty and their
desire,
And Greece receive them, to be over-
come

In murderous woman-war, by fierce
red hands,
Kept savage by the right. For
every wife
Shall slay a husband, dyeing deep
in blood
The sword of double edge!—(I wish
indeed
As fair a marriage-joy to all my foes!)
One bride alone shall fail to smite to
death
The head upon her pillow, touched
with love,,
Made impotent of purpose, and
impelled
To choose the lesser evil,—shame on
her cheeks,
To blood-guilt on her hands. Which
bride shall bear
A royal race in Argos. Tedious
speech
Were needed to relate particulars
Of these things—'tis enough that,
from her seed,
Shall spring the strong He—famous
with the bow,
Whose arms shall break my fetters
off! Behold,
My mother Themis, that old Titaness,
Delivered to me such an oracle,—
But how and when, I should be
long to speak,
And thou, in hearing, wouldst not
gain at all.

Io. Eleleu, eleleu!

How the spasm and the pain,
And the fire on the brain,
Strike, burning me through!
How the sting of the curse, all
afame as it flew,
Pricks me onward again!
How my heart, in its terror, is
spurning my breast,—
And my eyes, like the wheels of a
chariot, roll round,—
I am whirled from my course, to
the east, to the west,
In the whirlwind of frenzy all
madly inwound—
And my mouth is unbridled for
anguish and hate,
And my words beat in vain, in wild
storms of unrest,
On the sea of my desolate
fate.

Chorus.—Strophe.

Oh, wise was he, oh, wise was he,
Who first within his spirit knew
And with his tongue declared it true,
That love comes best that comes unto
The equal of degree!

And that the poor and that the low
Should seek no love from those above
Whose souls are fluttered with the flow
Of airs about their golden height,
Or proud because they see arow
Ancestral crowns of light!

Antistrophe.

Oh! never, never, may ye, Fates,
Behold me with your awful eyes
Lift mine too fondly up the skies
Where Zeus upon the purple waits!—
Nor let me step too near—too
near—

To any suitor, bright from heaven!
Because I see—because I fear
This loveless maiden vexed and laden
By this fell curse of Heré,—driven
On wanderings dread and drear!

Epode.

Nay, grant an equal troth instead
Of nuptial love, to bind me by!—
It will not hurt—I shall not dread
To meet it in reply.

And let not love from those above
Revert and fix me, as I said,
With that inevitable Eye!

I have no sword to fight that fight—
I have no strength to tread that path—
I know not if my nature hath
The power to bear,—I cannot see,
Whither, from Zeus's infinite,
I can have power to flee.

Prometheus. Yet Zeus howbeit
most absolute of will,
Shall turn to meekness,—such a
marriage-rite

He holds in preparation, which anon
Shall thrust him headlong from his
gerent seat

Adown the abysmal void! and so the
curse

His father Chronos muttered in his fall,
As he fell from his ancient throne
and cursed,

Shall be accomplished wholly. No
escape

From all that ruin shall the filial Zeus
Find granted to him from any of his
gods,

Unless I teach him—I, the refuge,
know,

And I, the means.—Now, therefore,
let him sit

And brave the imminent doom, and
fix his faith

On his supernal noises, hurtling on
With restless hand, the bolt that
breathes out fire—

For these things shall not help him—
none of them—

Nor hinder his perdition when he falls
To shame, and lower than patience.—

Such a foe
He doth himself prepare against him-
self,—

A wonder of unconquerable Hate,
An organiser of sublimer fire
Than glares in lightnings, and of
grander sound

Than aught the thunder rolls,—
out-thundering it,—

With power to shatter in Poseidon's
fist

The trident-spear, which, while it
plagues the sea,

Doth shake the shores around it.
Ay, and Zeus,

Precipitated thus, shall learn at length
The difference betwixt rule and
servitude.

Chorus. Thou makest threats for
Zeus of thy desires.

Prometheus. I tell you, all these
things shall be fulfilled,

Even so as I desire them.

Chorus. Must we then
Look out for one to come, to master
Zeus?

Prometheus. These chains weigh
lighter than his sorrows shall.

Chorus. How art thou not afraid
to utter such words?

Prometheus. What should I fear,
who cannot die?

Chorus. But he
Can visit thee with dreder woe than
death's.

Prometheus. Why, let him do it!
—I am here, prepared

For all things and their pangs.

Chorus. The wise are they
Who reverence Adrasteia.

Prometheus. Reverence thou,
Adore thou, flatter thou, whomever
reigns,

Whenever reigning—but for me,
 your Zeus
 Is less than nothing! Let him act
 and reign
 His brief hour out according to his
 will—
 He will not, therefore, rule the gods
 too long!—
 But lo! I see that courier-god of Zeus,
 That new-made menial of the new-
 crowned king—
 He doubtless comes to announce us
 something new.

HERMES enters.

Hermes. I speak to thee, the
 sophist,—the talker down
 Of scorn by scorn,—the sinner
 against gods,—
 The reverencer of men,—the thief
 of fire,—
 I speak to thee and adjure thee! Zeus
 requires
 Thy declaration of what marriage-rite
 Thus moves thy vaunt, and shall
 hereafter cause
 His fall from empire! Do not wrap
 thy speech
 In riddles, but speak clearly! Do
 not cast
 Ambiguous paths, Prometheus, for
 my feet—
 Since Zeus, thou may'st perceive,
 is scarcely won
 To mercy, by such means.

Prometheus. A speech well-mouthed
 In the utterance, and full-minded in
 the sense,
 As doth befit a servant of the gods!
 New gods, ye newly reign, and think
 forsooth
 Ye dwell in towers too high for any
 dart
 To take a wound there!—Have I not
 stood by
 While two kings fell from thence?
 and shall I not
 Behold the third, the same who rules
 you now,
 Fall, shamed, to sudden ruin?—Do
 I seem
 To tremble and quail before your
 modern gods?
 Far be it from me! For thyself, depart,
 Re-tread thy steps in haste! To all
 thou hast asked

I answer nothing.

Hermes. Such a wind of pride
 Impelled thee of yore full sail upon
 these rocks!

Prometheus. I would not barter—
 learn thou soothly that!—
 My suffering for thy service! I
 maintain

It is a nobler thing to serve these rocks
 Than live a faithful slave to father
 Zeus—

Thus upon scorners I retort their
 scorn.

Hermes. It seems that thou dost
 glory in thy despair.

Prometheus. I, glory? would my
 foes did glory so,
 And I stood by to see them!—
 Naming whom,
 Thou art not unremembered.

Hermes. Dost thou charge
 Me also with the blame of thy mis-
 chance?

Prometheus. I tell thee, I loathe
 the universal gods
 Who for the good I gave them
 rendered back
 The ill of their injustice.

Hermes. Thou art mad—
 I hear thee raving, Titan, at the
 fever-height!

Prometheus. If it be madness to
 abhor my foes,
 May I be mad!

Hermes. If thou wert prosperous,
 Thou wouldst be unendurable.

Prometheus. Alas!
Hermes. Zeus knows not that word.

Prometheus. But maturing Time
 Teaches all things

Hermes. Howbeit, thou hast not
 learnt

The wisdom yet, thou needest.

Prometheus. If I had,
 I should not talk thus with a slave
 like thee

Hermes. No answer thou vouch-
 safest, I believe,

To the great Sire's requirement.

Prometheus. Verily
 I owe him grateful service,—and
 should pay it.

Hermes. Why, thou dost mock
 me, Titan, as I stood
 A child before thy face.

Prometheus. No child, forsooth,

But yet more foolish than a foolish child,

If thou expect that I should answer aught

Thy Zeus can ask. No torture from his hand,

Nor any machination in the world Shall force mine utterance, ere he loose, himself,

These cankerous fetters from me ! For the rest,

Let him now hurl his blanching lightnings down,

And with his white-winged snows and mutterings deep

Of subterranean thunders, mix all things,

Confound them in disorder ! None of this

Shall bend my sturdy will, and make me speak

The name of his dethroner who shall come.

Hermes. Can this avail thee ?

Look to it !

Prometheus. Long ago

It was looked forward to,—pre-counselled of.

Hermes. Vain god, take righteous courage !—dare for once

To apprehend and front thine agonies With a just prudence !

Prometheus. Vainly dost thou chafe My soul with exhortation, as yonder sea

Goes beating on the rock. Oh ! think no more

That I, fear-struck by Zeus to a woman's mind,

Will supplicate him, loathed as he is, With feminine upliftings of my hands,

To break these chains ! Far from me be the thought !

Hermes. I have indeed, methinks, said much in vain,—

For still thy heart, beneath my showers of prayers,

Lies dry and hard !—nay, leaps like a young horse

Who bites against the new bit in his teeth,

And tugs and struggles against the new-tried rein !—

Still fiercest in the feeblest thing of all, Which sophism is,—since absolute will disjoined

From perfect mind is worse than weak. Behold,

Unless my words persuade thee, what a blast

And whirlwind of inevitable woe Must sweep persuasion through thee !

For at first The Father will split up this jut of rock

With the great thunder and the bolted flame,

And hide thy body where a hinge of stone

Shall catch it like an arm !—and when thou hast passed

A long black time within, thou shalt come out

To front the sun, while Zeus's winged hound,

The strong carnivorous eagle, shall wheel down

To meet thee,—self-called to a daily feast,—

And set his fierce beak in thee, and tear off

The long rags of thy flesh, and batten deep

Upon thy dusky liver ! Do not look For any end moreover to this curse,

Or ere some god appear, to accept thy pangs

On his own head vicarious, and descend With unreluctant step the darks of hell,

And gloomy abyss around Tartarus !—Then ponder this !—this threat is

not a growth Of vain invention ! it is spoken and meant !

King Zeus's mouth is impotent to lie, Consummating the utterance by

the act—

So, look to it, thou !—take heed !—and nevermore [will !

Forget good counsel, to indulge self—*Chorus.* Our Hermes suits his

reasons to the times—

At least I think so !—since he bids thee drop

Self-will for prudent counsel. Yield to him !

When the wise err, their wisdom makes their shame.

Prometheus. Unto me the fore-knower, this mandate of power,

He cries, to reveal it ! What's strange in my fate, if I suffer from hate

At the hour that I feel it !
Let the locks of the lightning, all
bristling and whitening,

Flash, coiling me round !
While the æther goes surging 'neath
thunder and scourging

Of wild winds unbound !
Let the blast of the firmament whirl
from its place

The earth rooted below,—
And the brine of the ocean, in rapid
emotion,

Be it driven in the face
Of the stars up in heaven, as they
walk to and fro !

Let him hurl me anon, into Tartarus
—on—

To the blackest degree,
With Necessity's vortices strangling
me down !

But he cannot join death to a fate
meant for me !

Hermes. Why, the words that he
speaks and the thoughts that
he thinks,

Are maniacal !—Add,
If the Fate who hath bound him,
should loose not the links,

He were utterly mad.

Then depart ye who groan with
him,

Leaving to moan with him,—
Go in haste ! lest the roar of the
thunder anear,

Should blast you to idiocy, living
and hearing.

Chorus. Change thy speech for
another, thy thought for a
new,

If to move me and teach me,
indeed be thy care !

For thy words swerve so far from
the loyal and true,

That the thunder of Zeus seems
more easy to bear.

How ! couldst teach me to venture
such vileness ? Behold !

I choose, with this victim, this
anguish foretold !

I recoil from the traitor in hate
and disdain,—

And I know that the curse of the
treason is worse

Than the pang of the chain.

Hermes. Then remember, O
nymphs, what I tell you before,—

Nor, when pierced by the arrows
that Atë will throw you,
Cast blame on your fate, and
declare evermore

That Zeus thrust you on anguish
he did not foreshow you.

Nay, verily, nay ! for ye perish anon
For your deed—by your choice !—

by no blindness of doubt,
No abruptness of doom !—but by
madness alone,

In the great net of Atë, whence
none cometh out,

Ye are wound and undone !
Prometheus. Ay ! in act, now—in

word, now, no more,
Earth is rocking in space !

And the thunders crash up with a
roar upon roar—

And the eddying lightnings flash
fire in my face—

And the whirlwinds are whirling the
dust round and round—

And the blasts of the winds univer-
sal, leap free

And blow each upon each with a pas-
sion of sound,—

And æther goes mingling in storm
with the sea !

Such a curse on my head, in a mani-
fest dread,

From the hand of your Zeus has been
hurtled along !

O my mother's fair glory ! O Æther,
enringing,

All eyes, with the sweet common light
of thy bringing,

Dost see how I suffer this
wrong ?

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

1833.

THE TEMPEST

A FRAGMENT

"Mors erat ante oculos."—*Lucan*, lib. ix.

* * *

THE forest made my home—the
voiceful streams

My minstrel throng : the everlasting
hills,—

Which marry with the firmament,
and cry
Unto the brazen thunder, "Come
away,
Come from thy secret place, and try
our strength,"—
Enwrapp'd me with their solemn
arms. Here, light
Grew pale as darkness, scar'd by the
shade
O' the forest Titans. Here, in piny
state,
Reign'd Night, the Æthiopian queen,
and crown'd
The charm'd brow of Solitude, her
spouse.

* * *

A sign was on creation. You beheld
All things encolour'd in a sulph'rous
hue,
As day were sick with fear. The
haggard clouds
O'erhung the utter lifelessness of air ;
The top boughs of the forest all
aghast,
Stared in the face of Heav'n ; the
deep-mouth'd wind,
That hath a voice to bay the arm'd
sea,
Fled with a low cry like a beaten
hound ;
And only that askance the shadows,
flew
Some open-beak'd birds in wilder-
ment,
Naught stirr'd abroad. All dumb
did Nature seem,
In expectation of the coming storm.

It came in power. You soon might
hear afar
The footsteps of the martial thunder
sound
Over the mountain battlements ; the
sky
Being deep-stain'd with hues fantas-
tical,
Red like to blood, and yellow like to
fire,
And black like plumes at funerals ;
overhead
You might behold the lightning
faintly gleam

Amid the clouds which thrill and
gape aside,
And straight again shut up their
solemn jaws,
As if to interpose between Heaven's
wrath
And Earth's despair. Interposition
brief !
Darkness is gathering out her mighty
pall
Above us, and the pent-up rain is
loosed,
Down trampling in its fierce delirium.
Was not my spirit gladden'd, as
with wine,
To hear the iron rain, and view the
mark
Of battle on the banner of the clouds ?
Did I not harken for the battle-cry,
And rush along the bowing woods to
meet
The riding Tempest—skyey cataracts
Hissing around him with rebellion
vain ?
Yea ! and I lifted up my glorying
voice
In an "All hail ;" when, wildly
resonant,
As brazen chariots rushing from the
war,
As passion'd waters gushing from
the rock,
As thousand crash'd woods, the
thunder cried :
And at his cry the forest tops were
shook
As by the woodman's axe ; and far
and near
Stagger'd the mountains with a
mutter'd dread.
All hail unto the lightning ! hurriedly
His lurid arms are glaring through
the air,
Making the face of Heav'n to show
like hell !
Let him go breathe his sulphur
stench about,
And, pale with death's own mission,
lord the storm !
Again the gleam—the glare : I
turn'd to hail
Death's mission : at my feet there
lay the dead !
The dead—the dead lay there ! I
could not view

(For Night espoused the storm, and
made all dark)
Its features, but the lightning in his
course
Shiver'd above a white and corpse-
like heap,
Stretch'd in the path, as if to show
his prey,
And have a triumph ere he pass'd.
Then I
Crouch'd down upon the ground, and
groped about
Until I touch'd that thing of flesh,
rain-drench'd,
And chill, and soft. Nathless, I did
refrain
My soul from natural horror! I did
lift
The heavy head, half-bedded in the
clay,
Unto my knee; and pass'd my fingers
o'er
The wet face, touching every linea-
ment,
Until I found the brow; and chafed
its chill,
To know if life yet linger'd in its
pulse.
And while I was so busied, there did
leap
From out the entrails of the firma-
ment
The lightning, who his white un-
blanching breath
Blew in the dead man's face, dis-
cov'ring it
As by a staring day. I knew that
face—
His, who did hate me—his, whom I
did hate!
I shrunk not—spake not—sprang
not from the ground!
But felt my lips shake without cry
or breath,
And mine heart wrestle in my breast
to still
The tossing of its pulses; and a cold,
Instead of living blood, o'ercreep my
brow.
Albeit such darkness brooded all
around,
I had dread knowledge that the open
eyes
Of that dead man were glaring up
to mine,

With their unwinking, unexpressive
stare;
And mine I could not shut nor turn
away.
The man was my familiar. I had
borne
Those eyes to scowl on me their
living hate,
Better than I could bear their dead-
liness:
I had endured the curses of those lips,
Far better than their silence. Oh
constrain'd
And awful silence!—awful peace of
death!
There is an answering to all question-
ing,
That one word—*death*. Our bitter-
ness can throw
No look upon the face of death, and
live.
The burning thoughts that erst my
soul illumed,
Were quench'd at once; as tapers
in a pit
Wherein the vapour-witches weirdly
reign
In charge of darkness. Farewell all
the past!
It was out-blotted from my memory's
eyes,
When clay's cold silence pleaded for
its sin.
Farewell the elemental war! fare-
well
The clashing of the shielded clouds—
the cry
Of scath'd echoes! I no longer
knew
Silence from sound, but wander'd
far away
Into the deep Eleusis of mine heart,
To learn its secret things. When
arm'd foes
Meet on one deck with impulse vio-
lent,
The vessel quakes thro' all her oaken
ribs,
And shivers in the sea; so with
mine heart:
For there had battled in her solitudes,
Contrary spirits; sympathy with
power,
And stooping unto power;—the
energy

And passiveness,—the thunder and
the death !

Within me was a nameless thought :
it closed

The Janus of my soul on echoing
hinge,

And said "Peace!" with a voice
like War's. I bow'd,

And trembled at its voice : it gave
a key,

Empower'd to open out all mysteries
Of soul and flesh ; of man, who doth
begin,

But endeth not ; of life, and *after life*.

* * *

Day came at last : her light show'd
grey and sad,

As hatch'd by tempest, and could
scarce prevail

Over the shaggy forest to imprint

Its outline on the sky—expressionless,

Almost sans shadow as sans radiance :

An idiocy of light. I waken'd from

My deep unslumb'ring dream, but
utter'd naught.

My living I uncoupled from the dead,

And look'd out, 'mid the swart and
sluggish air,

For place to make a grave. A
mighty tree

Above me, his gigantic arms out-
stretch'd,

Poising the clouds. A thousand
mutter'd spells

Of every ancient wind and thund'rous
storm,

Had been off-shaken from his scath-
less bark.

He had heard distant years sweet
concord yield,

And go to silence ; having firmly kept

Majestical companionship with Time.

Anon his strength wax'd proud : his
tusky roots

Forced for themselves a path on
every side,

Riving the earth ; and, in their
savage scorn,

Casting it from them like a thing
unclean,

Which might impede his naked
clambering

Unto the heavens. Now blasted,
peel'd, he stood,

By the gone night, whose lightning
had come in

And rent him, even as it rent the man
Beneath his shade : and there the

strong and weak
Communion join'd in deathly agony.

There, underneath, I lent my fever-
ish strength,

To scoop a lodgment for the traveller's
corse.

I gave it to the silence and the pit,
And strew'd the heavy earth on all :

and then—

I—I, whose hands had form'd that
silent house,—

I could not look thereon, but turn'd
and wept !

* * *

O Death—O crown'd Death—pale-
steed'd Death !

Whose name doth make our respira-
tion brief,

Muffling the spirit's drum ! Thou,
whom men know

Alone by charnel-houses, and the dark
Sweeping of funeral feathers, and the
scath

Of happy days,—love deem'd in-
volute !

Thou of the shrouded face, which to
have seen

Is to be very awful, like thyself !—

Thou, whom all flesh shall see !—
thou, who dost call,

And there is none to answer !—thou,
whose call

Changeth all beauty into what we
fear,

Changeth all glory into what we
tread,

Genius to silence, wrath to nothing-
ness,

And love—not love !—thou hast no
change for love !

Thou, who art Life's betroth'd, and
bear'st her forth

To scare her with sad sights,—who
hast thy joy

Where'er the peopled towns are dumb
with plague,—

Where'er the battle and the vulture
meet,—

Where'er the deep sea writhes like
Laocoon

Beneath the serpent winds, and
vessels split
On secret rocks, and men go gurgling
down,
Down, down, to lose their shriekings
in the depth !
O universal thou ! who comest aye
Among the minstrels, and their
tongue is tied ;—
Among the sophists, and their brain
is still ;—
Among the mourners, and their wail
is done ;—
Among the dancers, and their tink-
ling feet
No more make echoes on the tombing
earth ;—
Among the wassail rout, and all the
lamps
Are quench'd, and wither'd the wine-
pouring hands !
My heart is arm'd not in panoply
Of the old Roman iron, nor assumes
The Stoic valour. 'Tis a human heart,
And so confesses, with a human
fear ;—
That only for the hope the Cross
inspires,
That only for the MAN Who died and
lives,
'Twould crouch beneath thy sceptre's
royalty,
With faintness of the pulse, and
backward cling
To life. But knowing what I soothly
know,
High-seeming Death, I dare thee !
and have hope,
In God's good time, of showing to thy
face
An unsuccumbing spirit, which
sublime
May cast away the low anxieties
That wait upon the flesh—the reptile
moods ;
And enter that eternity to come,
Where live the dead, and only Death
shall die.

A SEA-SIDE MEDITATION

"Ut per aquas quæ nunc rerum simulacra
videmus." —*Lucretius*, lib. i.

Go, travel 'mid the hills ! The
summer's hand
Hath shaken pleasant freshness o'er
them all.

Go, travel 'mid the hills ! There,
tuneful streams

Are touching myriad stops, invisible ;
And winds, and leaves, and birds,
and your own thoughts,
(Not the least glad) in wordless
chorus, crowd
Around the thymel¹ of Nature.

Go,
And travel onward. Soon shall leaf
and bird,

Wind, stream, no longer sound.
Thou shalt behold

Only the pathless sky, and houseless
sward ;

O'er which anon are spied innumerable
sails

Of fisher vessels like the wings o' the hill,
And white as gulls above them, and
as fast—

But sink they—sink they out of sight.
And now

The wind is springing upward in your
face ;

And, with its fresh-toned gushings,
you may hear

Continuous sound which is not of the
wind,

Nor of the thunder, nor o' the cata-
ract's

Deep passion, nor o' the earthquake's
wilder pulse ;

But which rolls on in stern tran-
quillity,

As memories of evil o'er the soul ;
Boweth the bare broad Heaven.—

What view you ? sea—and sea !

The sea—the glorious sea ! from side
to side,

Swinging the grandeur of his foamy
strength,

And undersweeping the horizon,—
on—

On—with his life and voice in-
scrutable.

Pause : sit you down in silence ! I
have read

Of that Athenian, who, when ocean
rag'd,

Unchain'd the prison'd music of his
lips,

By shouting to the billows, sound for
sound.

¹ The central point of the choral movements
in the Greek theatre.

I marvel how his mind would let his
 tongue
 Affront thereby the ocean's solemn-
 ness,
 Are we not mute, or speak restrainedly,
 When overhead the trampling tem-
 pests go,
 Dashing their lightning from their
 hoofs? and when
 We stand beside the bier? and when
 we see
 The strong bow down to weep—and
 stray among
 Places which dust or mind hath
 sanctified?
 Yea! for such sights and acts do tear
 apart
 The close and subtle clasping of a
 chain,
 Form'd not of gold, but of corroded
 brass,
 Whose links are furnish'd from the
 common mine
 Of every day's event, and want, and
 wish;
 From work-times, diet-times, and
 sleeping-times:
 And thence constructed, mean and
 heavy links
 Within the pandemonic walls of sense,
 Enchain our deathless part, constrain
 our strength,
 And waste the goodly stature of our
 soul.
 Howbeit, we love this bondage;
 we do cleave
 Unto the sordid and unholy thing,
 Fearing the sudden wrench required
 to break
 Those clasp'd links. Behold! all
 sights and sounds
 In air, and sea, and earth, and under
 earth,
 All flesh, all life, all ends, are
 mysteries;
 And all that is mysterious dreadful
 seems,
 And all we cannot understand we fear.
 Ourselves do scare ourselves: we
 hide our sight
 In artificial nature from the true,
 And throw sensation's veil associative
 On God's creation, man's intelligence;
 Bowing our high imaginings to eat
 Dust, like the serpent, once erect as
 they;

Binding conspicuous on our reason's
 brow
 Phylacteries of shame; learning to
 feel
 By rote, and act by rule (man's rule,
 not God's!)
 Until our words grow echoes, and our
 thoughts
 A mechanism of spirit. Can this last?
 No! not for aye. We cannot subject
 aye
 The heav'n-born spirit to the earth-
 born flesh.
 Tame lions *will* scent blood, and
 appetite
 Carnivorous glare from out their rest-
 less eyes.
 Passions, emotions, sudden changes,
 throw
 Our nature back upon us, till we burn.
 What warmed Cyrene's fount? As
 poets sing,
 The *change* from light to dark, from
 dark to light.
 All that doth force this nature back
 on us,
 All that doth force the mind to view
 the mind,
 Engend'reth what is named by men,
sublime.
 Thus when, our wonted valley left,
 we gain
 The mountain's horrent brow, and
 mark from thence
 The sweep of lands extending with
 the sky;
 Or view the spanless plain; or turn
 our sight
 Upon yon deep immensity;—we
 breathe
 As if our breath were marble: to
 and fro
 Do reel our pulses, and our words are
 mute.
 We cannot mete by parts, but grapple
 all;
 We cannot measure with our eye, but
 soul;
 And fear is on us. The extent unused,
 Our spirit, sends, to spirit's element,
 To seize upon abstractions: first on
 space,
 The which *eternity in place*, I deem;
 And then upon eternity; till thought

Hath form'd a mirror from their
secret sense,
Wherein we view ourselves, and back
recoil
At our own awful likeness ; ne'ertheless,
Cling to that likeness with a wonder
wild,
And while we tremble, glory—proud
in fear.

So ends the prose of life : and so shall
be •
Unlock'd her poetry's magnific store.
And so, thou pathless and perpetual
sea,
So, o'er thy deeps, I brooded and
must brood,
Whether I view thee in thy dreadful
peace,
Like a spent warrior hanging in the
sun
His glittering arms, and meditating
death ;
Or whether thy wild visage gath'reth
shades,
What time thou marshall'st forth
thy waves who hold
A covenant of storms, then roar and
wind
Under the rocking rocks ; as martyrs
lie
Wheel-bound ; and, dying, utter
lofty words !
Whether the strength of day is young
and high,
Or whether, weary of the watch, he
sits
Pale on thy wave, and weeps himself
to death ;—
In storm and calm, at morn and even-
tide,
Still have I stood beside thee, and out-
thrown
My spirit onward on thine element,—
Beyond thine element,—to tremble
low
Before those feet which trod thee as
they trod
Earth,—to the holy, happy peopled
place,
Where there is no more sea. Yea,
and my soul,
Having put on thy vast similitude,
Hath wildly moan'd at her proper
depth,

B.P.

Echoed her proper musings, veil'd in
shade
Her secrets of decay, and exercised
An elemental strength, in casting up
Rare gems and things of death on
fancy's shore,
Till Nature said, "Enough."

Who longest dreams,
Dreams not for ever ; seeing day and
night

And corporal feebleness divide his
dreams,
And, on his elevate creations weigh
With hunger, cold, heat, darkness,
weariness :

Else should we be like gods ; else
would the course

Of thought's free wheels, increased in
speed and might,

By an eterne volution, oversweep
The heights of wisdom, and invade her
depths :

So, knowing all things, should we have
all power ;

For is not knowledge power ? But
mighty spells

Our operation sear ; the Babel must,
Or ere it touch the sky, fall down to
earth :

The web, half form'd, must tumble
from our hands,

And, ere they can resume it, lie
decay'd.

Mind struggles vainly from the flesh.
E'en so,

Hell's angel (saith a scroll apocryphal)
Shall, when the latter days of earth
have shrunk

Before the blast of God, affect his
heav'n ;

Lift his scarr'd brow, confirm his rebel
heart,

Shoot his strong wings, and darken
pole and pole,—

Till day be blotted into night ; and
shake

The fever'd clouds, as if a thousand
storms

Throbb'd into life ! Vain hope—
vain strength—vain fight !

God's arm shall meet God's foe, and
hurl him back !

A VISION OF LIFE AND DEATH

MINE ears were deaf to melody,
My lips were dumb to sound :

F

Where didst thou wander, O my soul,
When ear and tongue were bound ?

" I wandered by the stream of time,
Made dark by human tears :
I threw my voice upon the waves,
And *they* did throw me theirs."

And how did sound the waves, my
soul ?

And how did sound the waves ?
" Hoarse, hoarse, and wild !—they
ever dash'd
'Gainst ruin'd thrones and graves."

And what sight on the shore, my soul ?
And what sight on the shore ?

" Twain beings sate there silently,
And sit there evermore."

Now tell me fast and true, my soul ;
Now tell me of those twain.

" One was yclothed in mourning vest,
And one, in trappings vain.

" She in the trappings vain, was fair,
And eke fantastical :

A thousand colours dyed her garb ;
A blackness bound them all.

" In part her hair was gaily wreath'd,
In part was wildly spread :
Her face did change its hue too fast,
To say 'twas pale or red.

" And when she look'd on earth, I
thought

She smiled for very glee :
But when she look'd to heav'n, I
knew

That tears stood in her ee.

" She held a mirror, there to gaze :
It could no cheer bestow ;

For while her beauty cast the shade,
Her breath did make it go.

" A harper's harp did lie by her,
Without the harper's hest ;

A monarch's crown did lie by her,
Wherein an owl had nest :

" A warrior's sword did lie by her,
Grown rusty since the fight ;

A poet's lamp did lie by her :—
Ah me !—where was its light ?"

And what didst *thou* say, O my soul,
Unto that mystic dame ?

" I ask'd her of her tears, and eke
I ask'd her of her name.

" She said, she built a prince's
throne :

She said, he ruled the grave ;
And that the levelling worm ask'd
not

If he were king or slave.

" She said, she form'd a godlike
tongue,

Which lofty thoughts unsheathed ;
Which roll'd its thunder round, and
purged

The air the nations breathed.

" She said, that tongue, all eloquent,
With silent dust did mate ;

Whereon false friends betray'd long
faith,

And foes outspat their hate.

" She said, she warm'd a student's
heart,

But heart and brow 'gan fade :
Alas, alas ! those Delphic trees

Do cast an upas shade !

" She said, she lighted happy
hearths,

Whose mirth was all forgot :
She said, she tun'd marriage bells,
Which rang when love was *not*.

" She said, her name was Life ; and
then

Out laugh'd and wept aloud,—
What time the other being strange
Lifted the veiling shroud.

" Yea ! lifted she the veiling shroud,
And breathed the icy breath ;

Whereat, with inward shuddering,
I knew *her* name was Death.

" Yea ! lifted she her calm, calm
brow,

Her clear cold smile on me :
Whereat within my deepness, leap'd
Mine immortality.

" She told me, it did move her smile,
To witness how I sigh'd,

Because that what was fragile brake,
And what was mortal died :

" As if that kings could grasp the
earth,

Who from its dust began ;
As if that suns could shine at night,
Or glory dwell with man.

"She told me, she had freed *his* soul,
Who aye did freedom love;
Who now reck'd not, were worms
below,
Or ranker worms above!

"She said, the student's heart had
beat
Against its prison dim;
Until she crush'd the bars of flesh,
And pour'd truth's light on him.

"She said, that they who left the
heartily
For aye in sunshine dwell;
She said, the funeral tolling brought
More joy than marriage bell!

"And as she spake, she spake less
loud;
The stream resounded more:
Anon I nothing heard but waves,
That wail'd along the shore."

And what didst thou say, O my soul,
Upon that mystic strife?

"I said, that Life was only Death,
That only Death was Life."

EARTH

How beautiful is earth! my starry
thoughts
Look down on it from their unearthly
sphere,
And sing symphonious—Beautiful is
earth!
The lights and shadows of her myriad
hills;
The branching greenness of her myriad
woods;
Her sky-affecting rocks; her zoning
sea;
Her rushing, gleaming cataracts;
her streams
That race below, the wing'd clouds
on high;
Her pleasantness of vale and mea-
dow!—

Hush!

Meseemeth through the leafy trees
to ring
A chime of bells to falling waters
tuned;
Whereat comes heathen Zephyrus,
out of breath
With running up the hills, and shakes
his hair

From off his gleesome forehead, bold
and glad
With keeping blythe Dan Phœbus
company;—
And throws him on the grass, though
half afraid;
First glancing round, lest tempests
should be nigh;
And lays close to the ground his
ruddy lips,
And shapes their beauty into sound,
and calls
On all the petal'd flowers, that sit
beneath
In hiding-places from the rain and
snow,
To loosen the hard soil, and leave
their cold
Sad idlesse, and betake them up to him.
They straightway hear his voice—

A thought did come
And press from out my soul the
heathen dream.

Mine eyes were purg'd. Straight-
way did I bind

Round me the garment of my
strength, and heard

Nature's death-shrieking—the here-
after cry,

When he o' the lion voice, the
rainbow-crowned,

Shall stand upon the mountains and
the sea,

And swear by earth, by Heaven's
throne, and Him

Who sitteth on the throne, there
shall be time

No more, no more! Then, veil'd
Eternity

Shall straight unveil her awful coun-
tenance

Unto the reeling worlds, and take
the place

Of seasons, years, and ages. Aye
and aye

Shall be the time of day. The
wrinkled heav'n

Shall yield her silent sun, made blind
and white

With an exterminating light: the
wind,

Unchained from the poles, nor having
charge

Of cloud or ocean, with a sobbing
wail

Shall rush among the stars, and
swoon to death.
Yea, the shrunk earth, appearing
livid pale
Beneath the red-tongued flame,
shall shudder by
From out her ancient place, and
leave—a void.
Yet haply by that void the saints
redeem'd
May sometimes stray ; when memory
of sin
Ghost-like shall rise upon their
holy souls ;
And on their lips shall lie the name of
earth
In paleness and in silentness ; until
Each looking on his brother, face to
face,
And bursting into sudden happy tears,
(The only tears undried) shall mur-
mur—" Christ ! "

THE PICTURE GALLERY AT PENSHURST

THEY spoke unto me from the
silent ground,
They look'd unto me from the
pictured wall :
The echo of my footstep was a
sound
Like to the echo of their own
footfall,
What time their living feet were
in the hall.
I breathed where they had breathed
—and where they brought
Their souls to moralise on glory's
pall,
I walked with silence in a cloud of
thought :
So, what they erst had learn'd, I
mine own spirit taught.
Ay ! with mine eyes of flesh, I did
behold
The likeness of their flesh ! They,
the great dead,
Stood still upon the canvas, while I
told
The glorious memories to their ashes
wed.
There, I beheld the Sidneys :—he,
who bled
Freely for freedom's sake, bore
gallantly

His soul upon his brow ;—he,
whose lute said
Sweet music to the land, meseem'd
to be
Dreaming with that pale face, of
love and Arcadie.

Mine heart had shrin'd these. And
therefore past
Where these, and such as these, in
mine heart's pride,
Which deem'd death, glory's other
name. At last

I stay'd my pilgrim feet, and
paused beside
A picture,¹ which the shadows half
did hide.

The form was a fair woman's form ;
the brow

Brightly between the clustering
curls espied :

The cheek a little pale, yet seeming
so

As, if the lips could speak, the pale-
ness soon would go.

And rested there the lips, so warm
and loving,

That, they *could* speak, one might
be fain to guess :

Only they had been much too
bright, if moving,

To stay by their own will, all
motionless.

One outstretch'd hand its marble
seal 'gan press

On roses which look'd fading ;
while the eyes,

Uplifted in a calm, proud loveliness,
Seem'd busy with their flow'ry
destinies,

Drawing, for ladye's heart, some
moral quaint and wise.

She perish'd like her roses. I did
look

On her, as she did look on them—
to sigh !

Alas, alas ! that the fair-written
book

Of her sweet face, should be in
death laid by,

As any blotted scroll ! Its cruelty
Poison'd a heart most gentle-
pulsed of all,

¹ Vandyke's portrait of Waller's *Saccharissa*.

And turn'd it into song, therein to die :
 For grief's stern tension maketh musical,
 Unless the strain'd string break or ere the music fall.

Worship of Waller's heart ! no dream of thine
 Reveal'd unto thee, that the lowly one,
 Who sate enshadow'd near thy beauty's shine,
 Should, when the light was out, the life was done,
 Record thy name with those by Memory won
 From Time's eternal burial. I am woo'd
 By wholesome thoughts this sad thought hath begun ;
 For mind is strengthen'd when awhile subdued,
 As he who touch'd the earth, and rose with power renewed.

TO A POET'S CHILD

A FAR harp swept the sea above ;
 A far voice said thy name in love :
 Then silence on the harp was cast ;
 The voice was chain'd—the love went last !

And as I heard the melodie,
 Sweet-voic'd Fancy spake of thee :
 And as the silence o'er it came,
 Mine heart, in silence, sigh'd thy name.

I thought there was one only place,
 Where thou couldst lift thine orphan'd face :
 A little home for prayer and woe ;—
 A stone above—a shroud below ;—
 That evermore, that stone beside,
 Thy wither'd joys would form thy pride ;
 As palm-trees, on their South Sea bed,
 Make islands with the flowers they shed.

Child of the Dead ! my dream of thee
 Was sad to tell, and dark to see ;
 And vain as many a brighter dream ;
 Since thou canst sing by Babel's stream !

For here, amid the worldly crowd,
 'Mid common brows, and laughter loud,
 And hollow words, and feelings sere,
 Child of the Dead ! I meet thee here !

And is thy step so fast and light ?
 And is thy smile so gay and bright ?
 And canst thou smile, with cheek undim,
 Upon a world that frowned on him ?

The minstrel's harp is on his bier ;
 What doth the minstrel's orphan here ?
 The loving moulders in the clay ;
 The loved,—she keepeth holyday !

'Tis well ! I would not doom thy years
 Of golden prime, to only tears.
 Fair girl ! 'twere better that thine eyes
 Should find a joy in summer skies,

As if their sun were on thy fate.
 Be happy ; strive not to be great ;
 And go not, from thy kind apart,
 With lofty soul and stricken heart.

Think not too deeply : shallow thought,
 Like open rills, is ever sought
 By light and flowers ; while fountains deep
 Amid the rocks and shadows sleep.

Feel not too warmly ; lest thou be
 Too like Cyrene's waters free,
 Which burn at night, when all around
 In darkness and in chill is found.

Touch not the harp to win the wreath :
 Its tone is fame, its echo death !
 The wreath may like the laurel grow,
 Yet turns to cypress on the brow !

And, as a flame springs clear and bright,
 Yet leaveth ashes 'stead of light ;
 So genius (fatal gift !) is doom'd
 To leave the heart it fired, consumed.

For thee, for thee, thou orphan'd one,
 I make an humble orison !
 Love all the world ; and ever dream
 That all are true who truly seem.

Forget ! for, so, 'twill move thee not,
Or lightly move ; to be forgot !
Be streams thy music ; hills, thy
mirth ;
Thy chiefest light, the household
hearth.

So, when grief plays her natural part,
And visiteth thy quiet heart ;
Shall all the clouds of grief be seen
To show a sky of hope between.

So, when thy beauty senseless lies,
No sculptured urn shall o'er thee rise ;
But gentle eyes shall weep at will,
Such tears as hearts like thine distil.

MINSTRELSY

" One asked her once the reason why
She hadde delyte in minstrelsie,
She answered on this manere."
—*Robert de Brunne.*

For ever, since my childish looks
Could rest on Nature's pictured
books ;

For ever, since my childish tongue
Could name the themes our bards
have sung ;

So long, the sweetness of their
singing

Hath been to me a rapture bringing !—
Yet ask me not the reason why
I have delight in minstrelsy.

I know that much whereof I sing
Is shapen but for vanishing ;
I know that summer's flower and leaf
And shine and shade are very brief,
And that the heart they brighten,
may,

Before them all, be sheathed in clay !—
I do not know the reason why
I have delight in minstrelsy.

A few there are, whose smile and
praise

My minstrel hope would kindly raise :
But, of those few—Death may im-
press

The lips of some with silentness ;
While some may friendship's faith
resign,

And heed no more a song of mine.—
Ask not, ask not the reason why
I have delight in minstrelsy.

The sweetest song that minstrels sing,
Will charm not Joy to tarrying ;

The greenest bay that earth can
grow,

Will shelter not in burning woe ;
A thousand voices will not cheer,
When *one* is mute that aye is dear !—
Is there, alas ! no reason why
I have delight in minstrelsy ?

I do not know ! The turf is green
Beneath the rain's fast-dropping
sheen,

Yet asks not why that deeper hue
Doth all its tender leaves renew ;—
And I, like-minded, am content,
While music to my soul is sent,
To question not the reason why
I have delight in minstrelsy.

Years pass—my life with them shall
pass :

And soon, the cricket in the grass,
And summer bird, shall louder sing
Than she who owns a minstrel's
string.

Oh, then may some, the dear and few,
Recall her love, whose truth they
knew ;

When all forget to question why
She had delight in minstrelsy !

TO THE MEMORY OF SIR UVEDALE PRICE, BART.

FAREWELL !—a word that human
lips bestow

On all that human hearts delight to
know :

On summer skies, and scenes that
change as fast ;

On ocean calms, and faith as fit to
last ;

On Life, from Love's own arms that
breaks away ;

On hopes that blind, and glories that
decay !

And ever thus, " farewell, farewell,"
is said,

As round the hills of lengthening time,
we tread ;

As at each step the winding ways
unfold

Some untried prospect which obscures
the old ;—

Perhaps a prospect brightly colour'd
o'er,

Yet not with brightness that we loved
before ;

And dull and dark the brightest hue
appears
To eyes like ours, surcharged and dim
with tears.

Of, off we wish the winding road
were past,
And yon supernal summit gain'd at
last ;

Where all that gradual change re-
moved, is found

At once, for ever, as you look
around ;

Where every scene by tender eyes
survey'd,

And lost and wept for, to their gaze
is spread—

No tear to dim the sight, no shade to
fall,

But Heaven's own sunshine lighting,
charming all.

Farewell!—a common word—and
yet how drear

And strange it soundeth as I write it
here !

How strange that *thou* a place of
death shouldst fill,

Thy brain unlighted, and thine heart
grown chill !

And dark the eye, whose plausible
glance to draw,

Incited Nature brake her tyrant's
law !

And deaf the ear, to charm whose
organ true,

Mæonian Music tuned her harp
anew !

And mute the lips where Plato's bee
hath roved ;

And motionless the hand that genius
moved !—

Ah, friend ! thou speakest not !—but
still to me

Do Genius, Music, Nature, speak of
thee !—

Still golden fancy, still the sounding
line,

And waving wood, recall some word
of thine :

Some word, some look, whose living
light is o'er—

And Memory sees what Hope can see
no more.

Twice, twice, thy voice hath spoken.
Twice there came

To us a change, a joy—to thee, a
fame !

Thou spakest once ;¹ and every pleas-
ant sight,

Woods waving wild, and fountains
gushing bright,

Cool copses, grassy banks, and all the
dyes

Of shade and sunshine gleam'd before
our eyes.

Thou spakest twice ;² and every
pleasant sound

Its ancient silken harmony unwound,
From Doric pipe and Attic lyre that

lay
Enclasp'd in hands whose cunning is
decay.

And now no more thou speakest !
Death hath met

And won thee to him ! Oh, remem-
ber'd yet !

We cannot *see*, and *harken*, and
forget !

My thoughts are far. I think upon
the time,

When Foxley's purple hills and woods
sublime

Were thrilling at thy step ; when
thou didst throw

Thy burning spirit on the vale below,
To bathe its sense in beauty. Lovely

ground !

There, never more shall step of thine
resound !

There, Spring again shall come, but
find thee not,

And deck with humid eyes her
favourite spot ;

Strew tender green on paths thy foot
forsakes,

And make that fair, which Memory
saddest makes.

For me, all sorrowful, unused to
raise

A minstrel song and dream not of thy
praise,

Upon thy grave my tuneless harp I lay,
Nor try to sing what only tears can

say.

So warm and fast the ready waters
swell—

So weak the faltering voice thou
knewest well !

¹ Essay on the Picturesque.

² Essay on the Pronunciation of the Ancient
Languages.

Thy words of kindness calm'd that
voice before ;
Now, thoughts of *them* but make it
tremble more ;
And leave its theme to others, and
depart
To dwell within the silence where
thou art.

THE AUTUMN

Go, sit upon the lofty hill,
And turn your eyes around,
Where waving woods and waters wild
Do hymn an autumn sound.
The summer sun is faint on them—
The summer flowers depart—
Sit still—as all transform'd to stone,
Except your musing heart.

How there you sat in summer-time,
May yet be in your mind ;
And how you heard the green woods
sing

Beneath the freshening wind.
Though the same wind now blows
around,

You would its blast recall ;
For every breath that stirs the trees
Doth cause a leaf to fall.

Oh ! like that wind, is all the mirth
That flesh and dust impart ;
We cannot bear its visitings,
When change is on the heart.

Gay words and jests may make us
smile,

When Sorrow is asleep ;
But other things must make us smile,
When Sorrow bids us *weep* !

The dearest hands that clasp our
hands,—

Their presence may be o'er :
The dearest voice that meets our ear,
That tone may come no more !
Youth fades ; and then, the joys of
youth,

Which once refresh'd our mind,
Shall come—as, on those sighing
woods,

The chilling autumn wind.

Hear not the wind—view not the
woods ;

Look out o'er vale and hill :
In spring, the sky encircled them—
The sky is round them still.

Come autumn's scathe—come winter's
cold—

Come change—and human fate !
Whatever prospect HEAVEN doth
bound,
Can ne'er be desolate.

THE DEATH-BED OF TERESA
DEL RIEGO

—“ Si fia muta ogni altra cosa, al fine
Parlerà il mio morire,
E ti dirà la morte il mio martire.”

—*Guarini.*

THE room was darken'd ; but a wan
lamp shed

Its light upon a half-uncurtain'd
bed,

Whereon the widow'd sate. Black-
ly as death

Her veiling hair hung round her, and
no breath

Came from her lips to motion it.
Between

Its parted clouds, the calm fair face
was seen

In a snow paleness, and snow silent-
ness,

With eyes unquenchable, whereon
did press

A little, their white lids, so taught to
lie,

By weights of frequent tears wept
secretly.

Her hands were clasp'd and raised—
the lamp did fling

A glory on her brow's meek suffering.

Beautiful form of woman ! seeming
made

Alone to shine in mirrors, there to
braid

The hair and zone the waist—to
garland flowers—

To walk like sunshine through the
orange bowers—

To strike her land's guitar—and
often see

In other eyes how lovely hers must
be.

Grew she acquaint with anguish ?
Did she sever

For ever from the one she loved for
ever,

To dwell among the strangers ? Ay !
and she,

Who shone most brightly in that
festive glee,
Sate down in this despair most
patiently.

Some hearts are Niobes! In grief's
down-sweeping,
They turn to very stone from over-
weeping,
And after, feel no more. Hers did
remain

In life, which is the power of feeling
pain,
Till pain consumed the life so call'd
below.

She heard that he was dead!—she
ask'd not how—

For *he* was dead! She wail'd not
o'er his urn,

For *he* was dead—and in *her* hands,
should burn

His vestal flame of honour radiantly.
Sighing would dim its light—she did
not sigh.

She only died. They laid her in the
ground,

Whereon th' unloving tread, and
accents sound

Which are not of her Spain. She
left behind,

For those among the strangers who
were kind

Unto the poor heart-broken, her
dark hair.

It once was gauded out with jewels
rare;

It swept her dying pillow—it doth lie
Beside me (thank the giver), droop-
ingly,

And very long and bright! Its tale
doth go

Half to the dumb grave, half to life-
time woe,

Making the heart of man, if manly,
ring

Like Dodonæan brass, with echoing.

TO VICTOIRE, ON HER MARRIAGE

VICTOIRE! I knew thee in thy land,
Where I was strange to all:
I heard thee; and were strange to me
The words thy lips let fall.

I loved thee—for the Babel curse
Was meant not for the heart:

I parted from thee, in such way
As those who love may part.

And now a change hath come to us.
A sea doth rush between!

I do not know if we can be
Again as we have been.

I sit down in mine English land,
Mine English hearth beside;
And thou, to one I never knew,
Art plightd for a bride.

It will not wrong thy present joy,
With bygone days to wend;
Nor wrongeth it mine English hearth,
To love my Gallic friend.

Bind, bind the wreath! the slender
ring

Thy wedded finger press!
May he who calls thy love his own,
Call so thine happiness!

Be he Terpander to thine heart,
And string fresh strings of gold,
Which may out-give new melodies,
But never mar the old!

And though I clasp no more thy hand
In my hand, and rejoice—
And though I see thy face no more,
And hear no more thy voice—

Farewell, farewell!—let thought of me
Visit thine heart! There is
In mine the very selfish prayer
That prayeth for thy bliss!

TO A BOY

WHEN my last song was said for thee,
Thy golden hair swept, long and free,
Around thee; and a dove-like tone
Was on thy voice—or Nature's own:
And every phrase and word of thine
Went out in lisping infantine!
Thy small steps faltering round our
hearth—

Thine een out-peering in their mirth—
Blue een! that, like thine heart,
seem'd given

To be, for ever, full of heaven!
Wert thou, in sooth, made up of glee,
When my last song was said for thee?

And now more years are finish'd,—
For thee another song is said.
Thy voice hath lost its cooing tone;
The lisping of thy words is gone:

Thy step treads firm—thine hair not
flings

Round thee its length of golden
rings—

Departed, like all lovely things !
Yet art thou still made up of glee,
When my *now* song is said for thee.

Wisely and well responded they,
Who cut thy golden hair away,
What time I made the bootless
prayer,

That they should pause awhile, and
spare.

They said, " its sheen did less agree
With boyhood than with infancy."
And thus I know it aye must be.
Before the revel noise is done,
The revel lamps pale one by one.

Ay ! Nature loveth not to bring
Crown'd victims to life's labouring.
The mirth-effulgent eye appears
Less sparkling—to make room for
tears ;

After the heart's quick throbs depart,
We lose the gladness of the heart :
And, after we have lost awhile
The rose o' the lip, we lose its smile ;
As Beauty could not bear to press
Near the death-pyre of Happiness.

This seemeth but a sombre dream ?
It hath more pleasant thoughts than
seem.

The older a young tree doth grow,
The deeper shade it sheds below ;
But makes the grass more green—
the air

More fresh, than had the sun been
there.

And thus our human life is found,
Albeit a darkness gathers round :
For patient virtues, that their
light

May shine to all men, want the night :
And holy Peace, unused to cope,
Sits meekly at the tomb of Hope,
Saying that " she is risen ! "

Then I
Will sorrow not at destiny,—
Though from thine eyes, and from
thine heart,

The glory of their light depart ;
Though on thy voice, and on thy brow,
Should come a fiercer change than
now ;

Though thou no more be made of glee,
When my next song is said for thee.

REMONSTRANCE

Oh, say not it is vain to weep
That deafen'd bier above ;
Where genius has made room for
death,
And life is past from love ;
That tears can never his bright looks
And tender words restore :
I know it is most vain to weep—
And therefore weep the more !

Oh, say not I shall cease to weep
When years have wither'd by ;
That ever I shall speak of joy,
As if he could reply ;
That ever mine unquivering lips
Shall name the name he bore :
I know that I may cease to weep,
And therefore weep the more !

Say, Time, who slew mine happiness,
Will leave to me my woe ;
And woe's own stony strength shall
chain

These tears' impassion'd flow :
Or say, that these, my ceaseless tears,
May life to death restore ;
For then my soul were wept away,
And I should weep no more !

REPLY.

To weep awhile beside the bier,
Whereon his ashes lie,
Is well !—I know that rains must fall
When clouds are in the sky :
I know, *to die—to part*, will cloud
The brightest spirit o'er ;
And yet, wouldst thou for ever weep,
When *he* can weep no more ?

Fix not thy sight, so long and fast,
Upon the shroud's despair ;
Look upward unto Zion's hill,
For death was also *there* !
And think, " The death, the scourge,
the scorn,

My sinless Saviour bore—
The curse—the pang, too deep for
tears—
That I should weep no more ! "

EPITAPH

BEAUTY, who softly walkest all thy
days

In silken garment to the tunes of
praise ;—
Lover, whose dreamings by the green-
bank'd river,
Where once she wander'd, fain would
last for ever ;—
King, whom the nations scan, ador-
ing scan,
And shout "a god," where sin hath
marked thee man ;—
Bard, on whose brow the Hyblan dew
remains,
Albeit the fever burneth in the
veins ;—
Hero, whose sword in tyrant's blood
is hot ;—
Sceptic, who doubting, wouldst be
doubted not ;—
Man, whose'er thou art, whate'er thy
trust ;—
Respect thyself in me ;—thou
treadest *dust*.

THE IMAGE OF GOD

"I am God, and there is none like me."
—*Isaiah*, xlii. 9.
"Christ, who is the image of God."
—*2 Corinthians*, iv. 4.

Thou ! art thou like to God ?
(I asked this question of the glorious
sun)

Thou high unwearied one,
Whose course in heat, and light, and
life is run ?

Eagles may view thy face—clouds
can assuage

Thy fiery wrath—the sage
Can mete thy stature—thou shalt
fade with age.

Thou art not like to God.

Thou ! art thou like to God ?
(I asked this question of the boun-
teous earth)

O thou, who givest birth
To forms of beauty and to sounds of
mirth ?

In all thy glory works the worm
decay—

Thy golden harvests stay
For seed and toil—thy power shall
pass away.

Thou art not like to God.

Thou ! art thou like to God ?
(I asked this question of my death-
less soul)

O thou, whose musings roll
Above the thunder, o'er creation's
whole ?

Thou art not. Sin, and shame, and
agony

Within thy deepness lie :
They utter forth their voice in thee,
and cry,

"*Thou art not like to God.*"

Then art Thou like to God ;
Thou, Who didst bear the sin, and
shame, and woe—

O Thou, Whose sweat did flow—
Whose tears did gush—Whose brow
was dead and low ?

No grief is like Thy grief ; no heart
can prove

Love like unto Thy love ;
And none, save only Thou—below,
above,—

O God, is like to God !

THE APPEAL

CHILDREN of our England ! stand
On the shores that girt our land ;
The ægis of whose cloud-white rock
Braveth Time's own battle shock.
Look above the wide, wide world ;
Where the northern blasts have
furl'd

Their numb'd wings amid the snows,
Muttering in a forced repose—

Or where the madden'd sun on high
Shakes his torch athwart the sky,
Till within their prison sere,

Chain'd earthquakes groan for fear !
Look above the wide, wide world,

Where a gauntlet Sin hath hurl'd
To astonied Life ; and where
Death's gladiatorial smile doth glare,

On making the arena bare.
Shout aloud the words that show
Jesus in the sands and snow ;—

Shout aloud the words that free,
Over the perpetual sea.

Speak ye. As a breath will sweep
Avalanche from Alpine steep,

So the spoken word shall roll
Fear and darkness from the soul.

Are ye men, and love not man ?
 Love ye, and permit his ban ?
 Can ye, dare ye, rend the chain
 Wrought of common joy and pain,
 Clasping with its links of gold,
 Man to man in one strong hold ?

Lo ! if the golden links ye sever,
 Ye shall make your heart's flesh
 quiver,
 And wheresoe'er the links are reft,
 There, shall be a blood-stain left.
 To earth's remotest rock repair,
 Ye shall find a vulture there :
 Though for others sorrowing not,
 Your own tears shall still be hot :
 Though ye play a lonely part ;
 Though ye bear an iron heart ;—
 Woe, like Echetus, still must
 Grind your iron into dust.

But, children of our Britain, ye
 Rend not man's chain of sympathy ;
 To those who sit in woe and night,
 Denying tears and hiding light.
 Ye have stretch'd your hands abroad
 With the Spirit's sheathless sword :
 Ye have spoken—and the tone
 To earth's extremest verge hath gone :
 East and west sublime it rolls,
 Echoed by a million souls !
 The wheels of rapid circling years,
 Erst hot with crime, are quench'd in
 tears.

Rocky hearts wild waters pour,
 That were chain'd in stone before :
 Bloody hands, that only bare
 Hilted sword, are clasp'd in prayer :
 Savage tongues, that wont to fling
 Shout of war in deathly ring,
 Speak the name which angels sing.
 Dying lips are lit the while
 With a most undying smile,
 Which reposing there, instead
 Of language, when the lips are dead,
 Saith,—“ No sound of grief or pain
 Shall haunt us when we move again.”

Children of our country ! brothers
 To the children of all others !
 Shout aloud the words that show
 Jesus in the sands and snow ;—
 Shout aloud the words that free,
 Over the perpetual sea !

IDOLS

How weak the gods of this world are—
 And weaker yet their worship made
 me !

I have been an idolater
 Of three—and three times they
 betray'd me !

Mine oldest worshipping was given
 To natural Beauty, aye residing
 In bowery earth and starry heav'n,
 In ebbing sea, and river gliding.

But natural Beauty shuts her bosom
 To what the natural feelings tell !
 Albeit I sigh'd, the trees would
 blossom—
 Albeit I smiled, the blossoms fell.

Then left I earthly sights, to wander
 Amid a grove of name divine,
 Where bay-reflecting streams meander,
 And Moloch Fame hath rear'd a
 shrine.

Not green, but black, is that reflec-
 tion ;
 On rocky beds those waters lie ;
 That grove hath chillness and dejec-
 tion,—
 How could I sing ? I had to sigh.

Last, human Love, thy Lares greeting,
 To rest and warmth I vow'd my
 years.

To rest ? how wild my pulse is beat-
 ing !
 To warmth ? ah me ! my burning
 tears.

Ay, *they* may burn—though thou be
 frozen
 By death, and changes wint'ring
 on !

Fame ! — Beauty ! — idols madly
 chosen—
 Were yet of gold ; but *thou* art
 STONE !

Crumble like stone ! my voice no
 longer
 Shall wall their names, who silent
 be :

There is a voice that soundeth
 stronger—
 “ My daughter, give thine heart to
 Me.”

Lord! take mine heart! O first and
 fairest,
 Whom all creation's ends shall
 hear;
 Who deathless love in death de-
 clarest!
 None else is beauteous—famous—
 dear!

HYMN

"Lord, I cry unto Thee: make haste unto me."

Psalms, cxli. 1.

"The Lord is high unto all them that call upon
 Him."—*Psalms, cxlv. 18.*

SINCE without Thee we do no good,
 And with Thee do no ill,
 Abide with us in weal and woe,—
 In action and in will.

In weal,—that while our lips confess
 The Lord Who "gives," we may
 Remember, with an humble thought,
 The Lord Who "takes away."

In woe,—that, while to drowning tears
 Our hearts their joys resign,
 We may remember *Who* can turn
 Such water into wine.

By hours of day,—that when our feet
 O'er hill and valley run,
 We still may think the light of truth
 More welcome than the sun.

By hours of night,—that when the
 air
 Its dew and shadow yields,
 We still may hear the voice of God
 In silence of the fields.

Oh! then sleep comes on us like
 death,
 All soundless, deaf, and deep:

Lord! teach us so to watch and pray,
 That death may come like sleep.

Abide with *us*, abide with *us*,
 While flesh and soul agree;
 And when our flesh is only dust,
 Abide our souls with *Thee*.

WEARINESS

MINE eyes are weary of surveying
 The fairest things, too soon decaying;
 Mine ears are weary of receiving
 The kindest words—ah, past be-
 lieving!

Weary my hope, of ebb and flow;
 Weary my pulse, of tunes of woe:
 My trusting heart is weariest!
 I would—I would, I were at rest!

For *me*, can earth refuse to fade?
 For *me*, can words be faithful made?
 Will *my* embittered hope be sweet?
My pulse forego the human beat?
 No! Darkness must consume mine
 eye—

Silence, mine ear—hope cease—
 pulse die—
 And o'er mine heart a stone be
 press'd—
 Or vain this,—“Would I were at
 rest!”

There is a land of rest deferr'd:
 Nor eye hath seen, nor ear hath
 heard,
 Nor Hope hath trod the precinct o'er;
 For hope beheld is hope no more!
 There, human pulse forgets its tone—
 There, hearts may know as they are
 known!

Oh for dove's wings, thou dwelling
 blest,
 To fly to *thee*, and be at rest!

THE SERAPHIM

[1838]

"I look for Angels' songs, and hear Him cry."—*Giles Fletcher.*

PART THE FIRST

[It is the time of the Crucifixion: and the
 Father of the Crucified has directed
 toward earth the angels of His
 heaven, of whom all have departed]

but the two Seraphim, ADOR the
 Strong and ZERAH the Bright One.

The place is the outer side of the shut
 heavenly gate.]

Ador. O SERAPH, pause no more !
Beside this gate of Heaven we stand
alone.

Zerah. Of Heaven !

Ador. Our brother hosts are gone—

Zerah. Are gone before.

Ador. And the golden harps the
angels bore

To help the songs of their desire,
Still burning from their hands
of fire,

Lie without touch or tone

Upon the glass-sea shore.

Zerah. Silent upon the glass-sea
shore !

Ador. There the Shadow from the
throne

Formless with infinity

Hovers o'er the crystal sea—

Awfuller than light derived,
And red with those primæval
heats

Whereby all life hath lived.

Zerah. Our visible God, our
heavenly seats !

Ador. Beneath us sinks the pomp
angelical,

Cherub and seraph, powers and
virtues, all,—

The roar of whose descent
hath died

To a still sound, as thunder into
rain,

Immeasurable space spreads
magnified

With that thick life, along the
plane

The worlds slid out on. What a
fall

And eddy of wings innumer-
ous, crossed

By trailing curls that have
not lost

The glitter of the God-smile
shed

On every prostrate angel's
head !

What gleaming up of hands
that fling

Their homage, in retorted
rays,

From high instinct of wor-
shipping,

And habitude of praise.

Zerah. Rapidly they drop below
us.

Pointed palm and wing and
hair,

Indistinguishable show us

Only pulses in the air

Throbbing with a fiery beat,—

As if a new creation heard

Some divine and plastic word,
And trembling at its new-found
being,

Awakened at our feet.

Ador. Zerah, do not wait for see-
ing.

His voice—His,—that “thrills us
so

As we our harpstrings—uttered
Go,

Behold the Holy in His woe—

And all are gone, save thee and—

Zerah. Thee !

Ador. I stood the nearest to the
throne

In hierarchical degree,

What time the voice said *Go*.

And whether I was moved alone

By the storm-pathos of the
tone

Which swept Heaven the
alien name of *woe*,

Or whether the subtle glory
broke

Through my stong and shielding
wings,

Bearing to my finite essence

Incapacious of their presence,

Infinite imaginings—

None knoweth save the Throned
Who spoke.

But I, who, at creation, stood upright
And heard the God-Breath

move,

Shaping the words that lightened—

“Be there light,”—

Nor trembled but with love,

Now fell down shudderingly,

My face upon the pavement whence
I towered ;

As if in mine immortal overpowered

By God's eternity !

Zerah. Let me wait !—let me
wait !—

Ador. Nay, gaze not backward
through the gate !

God fills our heaven with God's own
solitude

Till all its pavements glow.

His Godhead being no more subdued

By itself, to glories low
 Which seraphs can sustain,
 What if thou, in gazing so,
 Shouldst behold but only one
 Attribute, the veil undone—
 Even that to which we dare to press
 Nearest, for its gentleness—
 Ay, His love!
 How the deep ecstatic pain
 Thy being's strength would capture!
 Without a language for the rapture,
 Without a music strong to come
 And set the adoration free,
 For ever, ever, wouldst thou be
 Amid the general chorus dumb,
 God-stricken to seraphic agony!—
 Or, brother, what if on thine
 eyes
 In vision bare should rise
 The life-fount, whence His hand did
 gather
 With solitary force
 Our immortalities!—
 Straightway how thine own would
 wither,
 Falter like a human breath,
 And shrink into a point like
 death,
 By gazing on its source!—
 My words have imaged
 dread.
 Meekly hast thou bent thine
 head,
 And dropt thy wings in lan-
 guishment
 Overclouding foot and face,
 As if God's throne were emi-
 nent
 Before thee, in the place.
 Yet not—not so,
 O loving spirit and meek, dost thou
 fulfil
 The supreme Will.
 Not for obedience but obedience,
 Give motion to thy wings! Depart
 from hence—
 The voice said "Go."
Zerah. Beloved, I depart.
 His will is as a spirit within my
 spirit,
 A portion of the being I inherit—
 His will is mine obedience. I
 resemble
 A flame all undefiled though it
 tremble—

I go and tremble. Love me, O be-
 loved!
 O thou, who stronger art,
 And standest ever near the Infi-
 nite,
 Pale with the light of Light!
 Love me, beloved! me, more newly
 made,
 More feeble, more afraid—
 And let me hear with mine thy
 pinions moved,
 As close and gentle as the loving
 are;
 That love being near, heaven may
 not seem so far.
Ador. I am near thee and I love
 thee.
 Were I loveless, from thee
 gone,
 Love is round, beneath, above
 thee—
 God, the omnipresent One.
 Spread the wing, and lift the
 brow—
 Well - beloved, what fearest
 thou?
Zerah. I fear, I fear—
Ador. What fear?
Zerah. The fear of earth.
Ador. Of earth, the God-created
 and God-praised
 In the hour of birth?
 Where every night, the moon
 in light
 Doth lead the waters silver-
 faced?
 Where every day, the sun doth
 lay
 A rapture to the heart of all
 The leafy and reeded pas-
 toral,
 As if the joyous shout which
 burst
 From angel lips to see him
 first,
 Had left a silent echo in his ray?
Zerah. Of earth—the God-created
 and God-curst:
 Where man is, and the thorn:
 Where sun and moon have
 borne,
 No light to souls forlorn.
 Where Eden's tree of life no more
 uprears
 Its spiral leaves and fruitage, but
 instead

The yew-tree bows its melancholy
head,
And all the undergrasses kills and
seres.

Ador. A fear of earth, the weak
Made and unmade?
Where men that faint, do strive for
crowns that fade;
Where, having won the profit which
they seek,
They lie beside the sceptre and the
gold

With fleshless hands that cannot
wield or hold,
And the stars shine in their unwink-
ing eyes?

Zerah. A fear of earth the bold.
Where the blind matter wrings
An awful potency out of impo-
tence,
Bowing the spiritual things
To the things of sense:
Where the human will replies
With ay and no,
Because the human pulse is quick or
slow—

Where Love succumbs to Change,
With only his own memories, for
revenge,
And the fearful mystery—

Ador. Called Death?

Zerah. Nay! Death is fearful,—
but who saith

“To die,” is comprehensible.
What’s fearfuller, thou knowest
well,

Though the utterance be not for
thee,

Lest it blanch thy lips from
glory—

Ay! the cursed thing that
moved

A shadow of ill, long times
ago,

Across our heaven’s own shining
floor!

And when it vanished, some
who were

On thrones of holy empire
there,

Did reign—were seen—were—
never more.

Come nearer, O beloved!

Ador. I am near thee, Didst
thou bear thee
Ever to this earth?

Zerah.

Before!—

When thrilling from His hand
along

Its lustrous path with spheric
song,

The earth was deathless, sorrow-
less.

Unfearing, then, pure feet might
press

The grasses brightening with
their feet,

For God’s own voice—did mix its
sound

In a solemn confluence oft
With the rivers’ flowing round,
And the life-tree’s waving soft.
Beautiful new earth, and
strange!

Ador. Hast thou seen it since—
the change?

Zerah. Nay! or wherefore should
I fear

To look upon it now?

I have beheld the ruined things
Only in depicturings

Of angels from an earthly
mission,

Strong one, even upon thy
brow

When, with task completed,
given

Back to us in that transi-
tion,

I have beheld thee silent stand,
Abstracted in the seraph band—

Without a smile in heaven.

Ador. Then thou wert not one of
those

Whom the loving Father chose,
In visionary pomp to sweep

O’er Judæa’s grassy places,
O’er the shepherds and the

sheep,—
Though thou art so tender?—

dimming

All the stars except one star,
With their brighter kinder

faces,
And using heaven’s own tune in

hymning,
While deep response from earth’s

own mountains ran,
“Peace upon earth—goodwill

to man.”
Zerah. “Glory to God!”—I said
Am:n afar.

And they who from that earthly mission are,

Within mine ears have told
That the seven everlasting Spirits did hold

With such a sweet and prodigal constraint

The meaning yet the mystery of the song,

The while they sang it, on their natures strong,

That, gazing down on earth's dark stedfastness

And speaking the new peace in promises,

The love and pity made their voices faint

Into that low and tender music, keeping

The place in heaven, of what on earth is weeping.

Ador. Peace upon earth! Come down to it.

Zerah. Ah me!

I hear thereof uncomprehendingly.

Peace where the tempest, where the sighing is,

And worship of the idol, 'stead of His?

Ador. Yea, peace, where *He* is.

Zerah. *He!*

Say it again.

Ador. Where *He* is.

Zerah. Can it be

That earth retains a tree
Whose leaves, like Eden foliage, can be swayed

By breathing of His voice, nor shrink and fade?

Ador. There is a tree!—it hath no leaf nor root.

Upon it hangs a curse for all its fruit:
Its shadow on His head is laid.

For *He*, the crowned Son,
Has left His crown and throne,—

Walks earth in Adam's clay,
Eve's snake to bruise and slay—

Zerah. Walks earth in clay?

Ador. And walking in the clay which *He* created,

He through it shall touch death.
What do I utter? what, conceive?

Did breath

Of demon howl it in a blasphemy?

Or was it mine own voice, informed, dilated,

By the seven confluent Spirits?—
Speak—answer me!

Who said man's victim was his Deity?

Zerah. Beloved, beloved, the word came forth from *thee*,

Thine eyes are rolling a tempestuous light,

Above, below, around,
As putting thunder-questions with-

out cloud,
Reverberate without sound,

To universal nature's depth and height.

The tremor of an inexpressive thought

Too self-amazed to shape itself aloud,

O'erruns the awful curving of thy lips:

And while thine hands are stretched above,

As newly they had caught
Some lightning from the Throne—

or showed the Lord
Some retributive sword—

Thy brows do alternate with wild eclipse

And radiance—with contrasted wrath and love—

As God had called thee to a seraph's part,

With a man's quailing heart.

Ador. O heart—O heart of man!
O ta'en from human clay,

To be no seraph's, but Jehovah's own!

Made holy in the taking,
And yet unseparate

From death's perpetual ban,
And human feelings sad and passionate!

Still subject to the treacherous forsaking

Of other hearts, and its own stedfast pain!

O heart of man—of God! which
God hath ta'en

From out the dust, with its humanity
Mournful and weak yet innocent

around it,
And bade its many pulses beating lie

Beside that incommunicable stir
Of Deity wherewith *He* interwound it.

O man! and is thy nature so defiled,
 That all that holy Heart's devout
 law-keeping,
 And low pathetic beat in deserts
 wild,
 And gushings pitiful of tender weep-
 ing
 For traitors who consigned it to such
 woe—
 That all could cleanse thee not—
 without the flow
 Of blood—the life-blood—*His*—and
 streaming so?
 O earth, the thundercleft, wind-
 shaken!—where
 The louder voice of "blood and
 blood" doth rise!
 Hast thou an altar for this sacrifice?
 O heaven—O vacant throne!
 O crowned hierarchies, that wear your
 crown
 When His is put away!
 Are ye unshamed, that ye cannot dim
 Your alien brightness to be liker
 Him,—
 Assume a human passion—and down-
 lay
 Your sweet secureness for congenial
 fears—
 And teach your cloudless ever-burn-
 ing eyes
 The mystery of His tears?
Zerah. I am strong, I am strong!
 Were I never to see my heaven
 again,
 I would wheel to earth like the tem-
 pest rain
 Which sweeps there with exultant
 sound
 To lose its life as it reaches the
 ground.
 I am strong, I am strong!
 Away from mine inward vision swim
 The shining seats of my heavenly
 birth—
 I see but His, I see but Him—
 The Maker's steps on His cruel earth.
 Will the bitter herbs of earth grow
 sweet
 To me, as trodden by His feet?
 Will the vexed, accurst humanity,
 As worn by Him, begin to be
 A blessed, yea, a sacred thing,
 For love, and awe, and ministering?
 I am strong, I am strong!
 By our angel ken, shall we survey

His loving smile through His woeful
 clay?

I am swift, I am strong—
 The love is bearing me along.
Ador. One love is bearing two
 along.

PART THE SECOND

[*Mid air, above Judæa. ADOR and ZERAH are a little apart from the visible Angelic Hosts.*]

Ador. BELOVED! dost thou see?—
Zerah. Thee,—thee.

Thy burning eyes already are
 Grown wild and mournful as a
 star

Whose occupation is for aye
 To look upon the place of clay
 Whereon thou lookest now!
 The crown is fainting on thy
 brow

To the likeness of a cloud—
 Thy forehead's self, a little
 bowed

From its aspect high and holy,
 As it would in meekness meet
 Some seraphic melancholy.
 Thy very wings that lately
 flung

An outline clear, do flicker here,
 And wear to each a shadow hung,
 Dropped across thy feet.

In these strange contrasting
 glooms
 Stagnant with the scent of
 tombs,

Seraph faces, O my brother,
 Show awfully to one another.

Ador. Dost thou see?

Zerah. Even so—I see
 Our empyreal company;
 Alone the memory of their
 brightness

Left in them, as in thee!

The circle upon circle, tier on tier,
 Piling earth's hemisphere
 With heavenly infiniteness;

Above us and around,
 Straining the whole horizon like a
 bow;

Their songful lips divorced from all
 sound,

A darkness gliding down their silvery
 glances,—

Bowing their stedfast solemn coun-
 tenances

As if they heard God speak and
could not glow.

Ador. Look downward ! dost thou
see ?

Zerah. And wouldst thou press
that vision on my words ?

Doth not Earth speak enough
Of change and of undoing
Without a Seraph's witness ?
Oceans rough

With tempest,—pastoral swards
Displaced by fiery deserts,—moun-
tains ruing

The bolt fallen yesterday,
That shake their piny heads, as who
would say,

"We are too beautiful for our
decay—"

Shall seraphs speak of these things ?
Let alone

Earth, to her earthly moan.

Voice of all things. Is there no
moan but *hers* ?

Ador. Hearst thou the attesta-
tion

Of the roused Universe,
Like a desert lion shaking
Dews of silence from its mane ?—

With an irrepresive passion
Uprising at once,

Rising up, and forsaking
Its solemn state in the circle of suns,
To attest the pain

Of Him who stands (O patience
sweet !)

In His own hand-prints of creation,
With human feet ?

Voice of all things. Is there no
moan but *ours* ?

Zerah. Forms, spaces, motions
wide,

O meek, insensate things,

O congregated matters ! who inherit,

Instead of vital powers,

Impulsions God-supplied—

Instead of influent spirit,

A clear informing beauty—

Instead of creature-duty,

Submission calm as rest !

Lights, without feet or wings,

In golden courses sliding !

Glooms, stagnantly subsiding,

Whose lustrous heart away was prest
Into the argent stars !

Ye crystal, firmamental bars,

That hold the skyey waters free

From tide or tempest's ecstasy !
Airs universal ! thunders lorn,
That wait your lightning in cloud-
cave

Hewn out by the winds ! O brave
And subtle Elements ! the Holy
Hath charged me by your voice
with folly.¹

Enough, the mystic arrow leaves its
wound.

Return ye to your silences inborn,
Or to your inarticulated sound !

Ador. *Zerah.*

Zerah. Wilt thou rebuke ?

God hath rebuked me, brother.—I
am weak.

Ador. *Zerah,* my brother *Zerah* !
—could I speak

Of thee, 'twould be of love to thee.
Zerah. Thy look

Is fixed on earth, as mine upon thy
face !—

Where shall I seek Him ?—

I have thrown

One look upon earth—but one—

Over the blue mountain-lines,
Over the forests of palms and

pinetrees ;

Over the harvest-lands golden ;

Over the valleys that fold in

The gardens and vines—

He is not there !

All these are unworthy

Those footsteps to bear,

Before which, bowing down

I would fain quench the stars of my
crown

In the dark of the earthy.

Where shall I seek Him ?

No reply ?

Hath language left thy lips, to
place

Its vocal in thine eye ?

Ador. *Ador* ! are we come

To a double portent, that

Dumb matter grows articulate

And songful seraphs dumb ?

Ador. *Ador* !—

Ador. I constrain

The passion of my silence.

None

Of those places gazed upon,

Are dull enow to fit His pain.

Unto Him, whose forming word

¹ "His angel He charged with folly."—*Job*,
iv. 18.

Gave to Nature flower and
sward,
She hath given back again,
For the myrtle, the thorn,—
For the sylvan calm, the human
scorn.
Still, still, reluctant Seraph, gaze
beneath!
There is a city—

Zerah. Temple and tower,
Palace and purple would droop like a
flower.

(As a cloud at our breath),
If He neared in His state
The outermost gate.

Ador. Ah me, not so
In the state of a King, did the
victim go!

And Thou who hangest mute of
speech

'Twixt heaven and earth, with
forehead yet

Stained by the bloody sweat,
God! man! Thou hast foregone Thy
throne in each!

Zerah. Thine eyes behold Him?

Ador. Yea, below.
Track the gazing of mine eyes,
Naming God within thine heart
That its weakness may depart
And the vision rise.

Seest thou yet, beloved?

Zerah. I see
Beyond the city, crosses three,
And mortals three that hang
thereon,

'Ghast and silent to the sun:
Round them blacken and welter and
press

Staring multitudes, whose father
Adam was—whose brows are
dark

With his Cain's corroded mark,—
Who curse with looks. Nay—
let me rather

Turn unto the wilderness.

Ador. Turn not. God dwells with
men.

Zerah. Above
He dwells with angels, and they love.
Can these love? With the living's
pride

They stare at those who die,—who
hang

In their sight and die. They bear the
streak

Of the crosses' shadow, black not
wide,

To fall on their heads, as it swerves
aside

When the victims' pan;
Makes the crosses creak.

Ador. The cross—the cross!

Zerah. A woman kneels

The mid cross under—

With white lips asunder

And motion on each,—

They throb, as she feels,

With a spasm, not a speech;

And her lids, close as sleep,

Are less calm—for the eyes

Have made room there to
weep

Drop on drop—

Ador. Weep? Weep blood,

All women, all men!

He sweated it, He,

For your pale womanhood

And base manhood. Agree

That these water-tears, then,

Are vain, mocking like laugh-
ter!

Weep blood!—Shall the flood
Of salt curses, whose foam is the
darkness, on roll

Forward, on, from the strand of the
storm-beaten years—

And back from the rocks of the
dreadful hereafter,

And up, in a coil, from the present's
wrath-spring,

Yea, down from the windows of
Heaven opening,—

Deep calling to deep as they meet on
His soul,—

And men weep only tears?

Zerah. Little drops in the lapse!

And yet, Ador, perhaps

It is all that they can.

Tears! the lovingest man

Has no better bestowed

Upon man.

Ador. Nor on God.

Zerah. Do all-givers need gifts?
If the Giver said "Give," the first
motion would slay

Our Immortals, the echo would ruin
away

The same worlds which He made.

Why, what angel uplifts

Such a music, so clear,

It may seem in God's ear

Worth more than a woman's hoarse weeping? And thus,
Pity tender as tears, I above thee would speak,

Thou woman that weepst! weep unscorned of us!

I, the tearless and pure, am but loving and weak.

Ador. Speak low, my brother, low,—and not of love,
Or human or angelic! Rather stand Before the throne of that Supreme above,

In whose infinitude the secrecies Of thine own being lie hid,—and lift thine hand

Exultant, saying, "Lord God, I am wise!"—

Than utter *here*, "I love."

Zerah. And yet thine eyes Do utter it. They melt in tender light,

The tears of Heaven.

Ador. Of Heaven. Ah me!

Zerah. Ador!

Ador. Say on.

Zerah. The crucified are three. Beloved, they are unlike.

Ador. Unlike.

Zerah. For one Is as a man who sinned and still

Doth wear the wicked will,
The hard malign life-energy,
Tossed outward, in the parting soul's disdain,

On brow and lip that cannot change again.

Ador. And one—

Zerah. Has also sinned. And yet (O marvel!) doth the Spirit-wind

Blow white those waters?—Death upon his face

Is rather shine than shade,
A tender shine by looks beloved made.
He seemeth dying in a quiet place,
And less by iron wounds in hands and feet

Than heart-broke by new joy too sudden and sweet.

Ador. And ONE!—

Zerah. And ONE—

Ador. Why dost thou pause?

Zerah. God! God! Spirit of my spirit! Whomovest

Through seraph veins in burning deity,

To light the quenchless pulses!—
Ador. But hast trod

The depths of love in Thy peculiar nature;

And not in any Thou hast made and lovest

In narrow seraph hearts!—

Zerah. Above, Creator! Within, Upholder!—

Ador. And below, below,
The creature's and the upholden's sacrifice!

Zerah. Why do I pause?—

Ador. There is a silentness

That answers thee enow,—

That, like a brazen sound

Excluding others, doth ensheathe us round,—

Hear it! It is not from the visible skies,

Though they are still,

Unconscious that their own dropped dews express

The light of heaven on every earthly hill.

It is not from the hills, though calm and bare

They, since their first creation,
Through midnight cloud or morning's glittering air

Or the deep deluge blindness, toward the place

Whence thrilled the mystic word's creative grace,

And whence again shall come

The word that uncreates,

Have lift their brows in voiceless expectation.

It is not from the places that entomb

Man's dead—though common Silence there dilates

Her soul to grand proportions, worthily

To fill life's vacant room.

Not there—not there!

Not yet within their chambers lieth He,

A dead One in His living world! His south

And west winds blowing over earth and sea,

And not a breath on that creating Mouth!

But now,—a silence keeps
 (Not death's, nor sleep's)
 The lips whose whispered word
 Might roll the thunders round reverberated.
 Silent art Thou, O my Lord,
 Bowing down Thy stricken head!
 Fearest Thou, a groan of Thine
 Would make the pulse of Thy creation fail
 As Thine own pulse?—would rend the veil
 Of visible things, and let the flood
 Of the Unseen Light, the essential God,
 Rush in to whelm the undivine?—
 Thy silence, to my thinking, is as dread!
Zerah. O silence!
Ador. Doth it say to thee—the NAME,
 Slow-learning Seraph?
Zerah. I have learnt.
Ador. The flame
 Perishes in thine eyes.
Zerah. He opened His—
 And looked. I cannot bear—
Ador. Their agony?
Zerah. Their love. God's depth
 is in them. From His brows
 White, terrible in meekness, didst thou see
 The lifted eyes uncloze?
 He is God, seraph! Look no more
 on me,
 O God! I am not God.
Ador. The loving is
 Sublimed within them by the sorrowful.
 In Heaven we could sustain them.
Zerah. Heaven is dull,
 Mine Ador, to man's earth. The
 light that burns
 In fluent, reflux motion
 Along the crystal ocean,—
 The springing of the golden harps
 between
 The bowery wings, in fountains of
 sweet sound—
 The winding, wandering music that
 returns
 Upon itself, exultingly self-bound
 In the great spheric round
 Of everlasting praise—

The God-thoughts in our midst that
 intervene,
 Visibly flashing from the supreme
 throne
 Full in seraphic faces,
 Till each astonishes the other, grown
 More beautiful with worship and
 delight!
 My heaven! my home of heaven! my
 infinite
 Heaven-choirs! what are ye to this
 dust and death,
 This cloud, this cold, these tears, this
 failing breath,
 Where God's immortal love now
 issueth
 In this MAN's woe?
Ador. His eyes are very deep yet
 calm—
Zerah. No more
 On me, Jehovah-man—
Ador. Calm-deep. They show
 A passion which is tranquil. They
 are seeing
 No earth, no heaven: no men, that
 slay and curse,
 No seraphs that adore.
 Their gaze is on the invisible, the
 dread,
 The things we cannot view or think
 or speak,
 Because we are too happy, or too
 weak,—
 The sea of ill, for which the universe
 With all its piled space, can find no
 shore,
 With all its life, no living foot to
 tread.
 But He, accomplished in Jehovah-being,
 Sustains the gaze adown,
 Conceives the vast despair,
 And feels the billowy griefs come up
 to drown,
 Nor fears, nor faints, nor fails, till all
 be finished.
Zerah. Thus, do I find thee thus?
 My undiminished
 And undiminishable God!—My God!—
 The echoes are still tremulous along
 The heavenly mountains, of the
 latest song
 Thy manifested glory swept abroad,
 In rushing past our lips! They echo
 aye
 "Creator, Thou art strong!—

Creator, Thou art blessed over all,"
By what new utterance shall I now
recall,

Unteaching the heaven-echoes?
Dare I say,

"Creator, Thou art feeble than Thy
work!

Creator, Thou art sadder than Thy
creature!

A worm, and not a man,—

Yea, no worm—but a curse?"—

I dare not, so, mine heavenly phrase
reverse.

Albeit the piercing thorn and thistle-
fork

(Whose seed disordered ran
From Eve's hand, trembling when the
curse did reach her)

Be garnered darklier in Thy soul! the
rod

That smites Thee never blossoming,
—and Thou,

Grief-bearer for Thy world, with
unkinged brow—

I leave to men their song of Ichabod!
I have an angel-tongue—I know but
praise.

Ador. Hereafter shall the blood-
bought captives raise
The passion-song of blood.

Zerah. And we, extend
Our holy vacant hands towards the
Throne,

Crying, "We have no music!"

Ador. Rather, blend
Both musics into one!

The sanctities and sanctified above
Shall each to each, with lifted looks
serene,

Their shining faces lean,
And mix the adoring breath
And breathe the full thanksgiving.

Zerah. But the love—
The love, mine Ador!

Ador. Do we love not?

Zerah. Yea,
But not as man shall! not with life
for death,

New-throbbing through the startled
being! not

With strange astonished smiles, that
ever may

Gush passionate like tears and fill
their place!

Nor yet with speechless memories of
what

Earth's winters were, enverduring
the green

Of every heavenly palm,
Whose windless, shadeless
calm

Moves only at the breath of the Un-
seen.

Oh, not with this blood on us—and
this face,—

Still, haply, pale with sorrow that it
bore

In our behalf, and tender evermore
With nature all our own, upon us

gazing!—
Nor yet with these forgiving hands
upraising

Their unreprouched wounds, alone to
bless!

Alas, Creator! shall we love Thee
less

Than mortals shall?

Ador. Amen! so let it be.
We love in our proportion—to the
bound

Thine infinite our finite set around,
And that is finitely,—Thou, infinite

And worthy infinite love! And our
delight

Is watching the dear love poured out
to Thee

From ever fuller chalice. Blessed they,
Who love Thee more than we do!

blessed we,
Viewing that love which shall exceed
even this,

And winning in the sight, a double
bliss,

For all so lost in love's supremacy!
The bliss is better! only on the sad

Cold earth there are who say
It seemeth better to be great than
glad.

The bliss is better! Love Him more,
O man,

Than sinless seraphs can.
Zerah. Yea, love Him more.

Voices of the angelic multitude. Yea,
more!

Ador. The loving word
Is caught by those from whom we
stand apart:

For Silence hath no deepness in her
heart.

Where love's low name low breathed
would not be heard

By angels, clear as thunder.

Angelic voices. Love Him more!

Ador. Sweet voices, swooning o'er

The music which ye make!
Albeit to love there were not
ever given

A mournful sound, when uttered
out of heaven,
That angel-sadness, ye would fit-
ly take.

Of love be silent now! we gaze
adown

Upon the Incarnate Love Who
wears no crown.

Zerah. No crown! the woe instead
Is heavy on His head,
Pressing inward on His
brain,

With a hot and clinging
pain,

Till all tears are preest away,
And clear and calm His vision
may

Peruse the long abyss.

No rod, no sceptre is
Holden in His fingers pale:
They close instead upon the
nail,

Concealing the sharp dole—
Never stirring to put by
The fair hair peaked with
blood,

Drooping forward from the
rood

Helplessly, heavily,

On the cheek that waxeth
colder,

Whiter ever,—and the shoul-
der

Where the government was
laid.

His glory made the Heavens
afraid—

Will He not unearth this cross
from its hole?

His pity makes His piteous
state:

Will He be uncompassionate
Alone to His proper soul?

Yea, will He not lift up

His lips from the bitter cup,
His brows from the dreary
weight,

His hands from the clench-
ing cross

Crying, "My Father, give to
Me

Again the joy I had with Thee,
Or ere this earth was made for
loss"—?

No stir—no sound!

The love and woe being inter-
wound

He cleaveth to the woe,
And putteth forth Heaven's
strength below—

To bear.

Ador. And that creates His an-
guish now,
Which made His glory there.

Zerah. Shall it indeed be so?

Awake, thou Earth! behold!
Thou, uttered forth of old

In all thy life-emotion,
In all thy vernal noises,
In the rollings of thine ocean,

Leaping founts, and rivers
running,

In thy woods' prophetic heav-
ing

Ere the rains a stroke have
given,

In thy wind's exultant voices
When they feel the hills anear,

In the firmamental sun-
ning,

And the tempest which re-
joices

Thy full heart with an awful
cheer!

Thou! uttered forth of old
And with all thy music rolled

In a breath abroad

By the breathing God!

Awake! He is here! behold!—
Even thou—

beseems it good

To thy vacant vision dim,
That the deadly ruin should,

For thy sake, encompass Him?
That the Master-word should

lie

A mere silence, while His own
Processive harmony,

The faintest echo of His
lightest tone

Is sweeping in a choral triumph by?

Awake! emit a cry!

And say, albeit used

From Adam's ancient
years

To falls of acrid tears,
To frequent sighs unloosed,

Caught back to press again
 On bosoms zoned with pain—
 To corse still and sullen
 The shine and music dulling
 With closed eyes and ears
 That nothing sweet can enter,
 Commoving thee no less
 With that forced quietness,
 Than earthquakes in thy
 centre—
 Thou hast not learnt to bear
 This, new divine despair!
 These tears that sink into thee,
 These dying eyes that view
 thee,
 This dropping blood from lifted
 road,
 They darken and undo thee!
 Thou canst not, presently, sustain
 this corse!
 Cry, cry, thou hast not force!
 Cry, thou wouldst fainer keep
 Thy hopeless charnels deep—
 Thyself a general tomb—
 Where the first and the second
 Death
 Sit gazing face to face
 And mar each other's breath,
 While silent bones through
 all the place,
 'Neath sun and moon do
 faintly glisten,
 And seem to lie and listen
 For the tramp of the coming
 Doom.
 Is it not meet
 That they who erst the Eden
 fruit did eat,
 Should champ the ashes?
 That they who wrapt them
 in the thunder-cloud,
 Should wear it as a shroud,
 Perishing by its flashes?
 That they who vexed the
 lion, should be rent?
 Cry, cry—"I will sustain my
 punishment,
 The sin being mine! but take
 away from me
 This visioned Dread—this
 Man—this Deity."
The Earth. I have groaned—I
 have travailed—I am weary—
 I am blind with mine own grief, and
 cannot see,
 As clear-eyed angels can, His agony,

And what I see I also can sustain,
 Because His power protects me from
 His pain.

I have groaned—I have travailed—
 I am dreary,
 Harkening the thick sobs of my
 children's heart.

How can I say "Depart,"
 To that Atoner making calm and free?
 Am I a God as He,

To lay down peace and power as
 willingly?

Ador. He looked for some to pity.
 There is none.

All pity is within Him, and not for
 Him.

His earth is iron under Him, and o'er
 Him

His skies are brass.
 His seraphs cry "Alas"
 With hallelujah voice that cannot
 weep.

And man, for whom the dreadful
 work is done—

Scornful voices from the Earth.
 If verily this be the Eternal's Son—

Ador. Thou hearest!—man is
 grateful!

Zerah. Can I hear,
 Nor darken into man, and cease for
 ever

My seraph-smile to wear?
 Was it for such,

It pleased Him to overleap
 His glory with His love, and
 sever

From the God-light and the
 throne

And all angels bowing down,
 For whom His every look did
 touch

New notes of joy on the un-
 worn string

Of an eternal worshipping!
 For such He left His
 heaven?

There, though never bought
 by blood

And tears, we gave Him
 gratitude!

We loved Him there, though
 unforgiven!

The light is riven
 Above, around,
 And downwardly in lurid fragments
 flung,

That catch the mountain-pinnacle
and stream,

With momentary gleam,
Then perish in the water and the
ground!

River and waterfall,
Forest and wilderness,
Mountain and city, are together
wrung

Into one shape, and that is shape-
lessness—

The darkness stands for all.

Ador. The pathos hath the day
undone:

The death-look of His eyes
Hath overcome the sun,
And made it sicken in its narrow
skies—

Is it to death? He dieth.

Zerah. Through the dark,
He still, He only, is discernible—
The naked hands and feet, transfixed
stark,

The countenance of patient anguish
white,

Do make themselves a light
More dreadful than the glooms which
round them dwell,
And therein do they shine.

Ador. God! Father-God!
Perpetual Radiance on the radiant
throne!

Uplift the lids of inward Deity,

Flashing abroad

Thy burning Infinite!

Light up this dark, where there is
nought to see,

Except the unimagined agony
Upon the sinless forehead of the
Son.

Zerah. God, tarry not! Behold,
enow

Hath He wandered as a stranger,
Groan'd as a victim. Thou,

Appear for Him, O Father!

Appear for Him, Avenger!

Appear for Him, just One and holy
One,

For He is holy and just!

At once the darkness and the evil,
rather

To the ragged jaws of hungry
chaos rake,

And hurl aback to ancient dust
These mortals that make blas-
phemies

With their made breath! this
earth and skies

That only grow a little dim,
Seeing their curse on Him!

But Him, of all forsaken,
Of creature and of brother,
Never wilt Thou forsake!

Thy living and Thy loving cannot
slacken

Their firm essential hold upon each
other—

And well Thou dost remember
how His part

Was still to lie upon Thy breast,
and be

Partaker of the light that dwelt
in Thee

Ere sun or seraph shone;

And how while silence trembled
round the throne,

Thou countedst by the beatings
of His heart

The moments of Thine own etern-
ity!

Awaken,

O right Hand with the lightnings!
Again gather

His glory to Thy glory! What
estranger—

What ill most strong in evil, can
be thrust

Between the faithful Father and
the Son?

Appear for Him, O Father!

Appear for Him, Avenger!

Appear for Him, just One and holy
One!

For He is holy and just.

Ador. Thy face, upturned toward
the throne, is dark—

Thou hast no answer, *Zerah.*

Zerah. No reply,
O unforsaking Father?—

Ador. Hark!

Instead of downward voice, a cry
Is uttered from beneath!

Zerah. And by a sharper sound
than death,

Mine immortality is riven.

The heavy darkness which doth tent
the sky,

Floats backward as by a sudden
wind—

But I see no light behind!

But I feel the farthest stars are all
Stricken and shaken,

And I know a shadow sad and broad,
 Doth fall—doth fall
 On our vacant thrones in heaven.
Voice from the Cross. My God,
 My God,
 WHY HAST THOU ME FORSAKEN ?
The Earth. Ah me, ah me, ah me !
 the dreadful why !
 My sin is on Thee, sinless One !
 Thou art
 God-orphaned, for my burden on
 Thy head.
 Dark sin ! white innocence ! endurance
 dread !
 Be still, within your shrouds, my
 buried dead—
 Nor work with this quick horror
 round mine heart !
Zerah. He hath forsaken Him !
 —I perish—
Ador. Hold
 Upon His name ! We perish not.
 Of old
 His will—
Zerah. I seek His will. Seek,
 Seraphim !
 My God, my God ! where is it ? Doth
 that curse,
 Reverberate, spare us, seraph or
 universe ?
He hath forsaken Him.
Ador. He cannot fail.
Angel voices. We faint—we droop
 Our love doth tremble like
 fear—
Voices of Fallen Angels, from the
earth. Do we prevail ?
 Or are we lost ?—Hath not the ill
 we did
 Been heretofore our good ?
 Is it not ill, that One, all sinless,
 should
 Hang heavy with all curses, on a
 cross ?
 Nathless, *that cry !*—with huddled
 faces hid
 Within the empty graves which men
 did scoop
 To hold more damned dead, we
 shudder through
 What shall exalt us or undo,—
 Our triumph, or—our loss.
Voice from the Cross. It is
 FINISHED.
Zerah. Hark, again !
 Like a victor, speaks the Slain—

Angel Voices. Finished be the
 trembling vain !
Ador. Upward, like a well-loved
 Son,
 Looketh He, the orphaned One—
Angel Voices. Finished is the
 mystic pain !
Voices of Fallen Angels. His
 deathly forehead at the word,
 Gleameth like a seraph sword.
Angel Voices. Finished is the
 demon reign !
Ador. His breath, as living God,
 createth—
 His breath, as dying man,
 completeth.
Angel Voices. Finished work His
 hands sustain !
The Earth. In mine ancient sepul-
 chres
 Where my kings and prophets
 freeze,
 Adam, dead four thousand
 years,
 Unwakened by the universe's
 Everlasting moan
 Aye his ghastly silence, mock-
 ing—
 Unwakened by his children's
 knocking
 'Gainst his old sepulchral
 stone,
 "Adam, Adam ! all this curse
 is
 Thine, and on us yet !"—
 Unwakened by the ceaseless
 tears
 Wherewith they made his
 cerement wet—
 "Adam, must thy curse re-
 main ?"—
 Starts with sudden life, and hears
 Through the slow dripping of the
 caverned eaves,—
Angel Voices. Finished is his bane !
Voice from the Cross. FATHER !
 MY SPIRIT TO THINE HANDS IS
 GIVEN !
Ador. Hear the wailing winds
 that be
 By wings of unclean spirits
 made !
 They, in that last look,
 surveyed
 The love they lost in losing
 heaven,

And passionately flee,
With a desolate cry that
cleaves

The natural storms—though
they are lifting

God's strong cedar-roots
like leaves;

And the earthquake and
the thunder,

Neither keeping neither
under,

Roar and hurtle through
the glooms,—

And a few pale stars are
drifting

Past the Dark, to disappear,
What time, from the split-

ting tombs

Gleamingly the Dead arise,
Viewing, with their death-

calmed eyes

The elemental strategies,
To witness, Victory is the

Lord's!—

Hear the wail o' the spirits!
hear.

Zerah. I hear alone the memory
of His words.

THE EPILOGUE

I

My song is done!

My voice that long hath faltered,
shall be still.

The mystic darkness drops from
Calvary's hill,

Into the common light of this day's
sun.

II

I see no more Thy cross, O holy Slain!
I hear no more the horror and the coil

Of the great world's turmoil
Feeling Thy countenance *too still*,—

nor yell
Of demons sweeping past it to their
prison.

The skies, that turned to darkness
with Thy pain,

Make now a summer's day,—
And on my changed ear, that Sab-

bath bell

Records how CHRIST IS RISEN.

III

And I—ah! what am I

To counterfeit, with faculty earth-
darkened,

Seraphic brows of light
And seraph language never used nor

harkened?

Ah me! what word that seraphs say,
could come

From mouth so used to sighs—so
soon to lie

Sighless, because then breathless, in
the tomb?

IV

Bright ministers of God and grace!
—of grace

Because of God!—whether ye bow
adown

In your own heaven, before the
living face

Of Him who died, and deathless wears
the crown—

Or whether at this hour, ye haply are
Anear, around me, hiding in the night

Of this permitted ignorance, your
light,

This feebleness to spare,—
Forgive me, that mine earthly heart

should dare

Shape images of unincarnate spirits,
And lay upon their burning lips a

thought
Cold with the weeping which mine
earth inherits!

And though ye find in such hoarse
music wrought

To copy yours, a cadence all the while
Of sin and sorrow—only pitying

smile!—

Ye know to pity, well.

V

I too may haply smile another day,
At the far recollection of this lay,

When God may call me in your midst
to dwell,

To hear your most sweet music's
miracle

And see your wondrous faces. May
it be!

For His remembered sake, the Slain
on rood,

Who rolled His earthly garment red
in blood,

(Treading the wine-press) that the
weak, like me,

Before His heavenly throne should
walk in white.

OTHER POEMS

[1838]

THE POET'S VOW

—O be wiser thou,
Instructed that true knowledge leads to love.
—Wordsworth.

PART THE FIRST

SHOWING WHEREFORE THE VOW
WAS MADE

I

Eve is a twofold mystery—
The stillness Earth doth keep,—
The motion wherewith human hearts
Do each to either leap,
As if all souls, between the poles,
Felt "Parting comes in sleep."

II

The rowers lift their oars to view
Each other in the sea;
The landmen watch the rocking boats,
In a pleasant company,
While up the hill go gladlier still
Dear friends by two and three.

III

The peasant's wife hath looked with-
out
Her cottage door and smiled,
For there the peasant drops his spade
To clasp his youngest child
Which hath no speech, but its hands
can reach
And stroke his forehead mild.

IV

A poet sate that eventide
Within his hall alone,
As silent as its ancient lords
In the confined place of stone;
When the bat hath shrunk from the
praying monk—
And the praying monk is gone.

V

Nor wore the dead a stiller face
Beneath the cerement's roll:
His lips refusing out in words
Their mystic thoughts to dole,
His stedfast eye burnt inwardly,
As burning out his soul!

VI

You would not think that brow
could e'er
Ungentle moods express:
Yet seemed it, in this troubled world,
Too calm for gentleness:
When the very star, that shines from
far,
Shines trembling, ne'ertheless.

VII

It lacked—all need—the softening
light
Which other brows supply:
We should conjoin the scathed
trunks
Of our humanity,
That each leafless spray entwining
may
Look softer 'gainst the sky.

VIII

None gazed within the poet's face—
The poet gazed in none:
He threw a lonely shadow straight
Before the moon and sun,
Affronting nature's heaven-dwelling
creatures,
With wrong to nature done.

IX

Because this poet daringly,
The nature at his heart,
And that quick tune along his veins
He could not change by art,
Had vowed his blood of brotherhood
To a stagnant place apart.

X

He did not vow in fear, or wrath,
Or grief's fantastic whim,—
But, weights and shows of sensual
things
Too closely crossing him,
On his soul's eyelid, the pressure slid
And made its vision dim.

XI

And darkening in the dark he strove
'Twixt earth and sea and sky,
To lose in shadow wave and cloud,
His brother's haunting cry.
The winds were welcome as they
swept:
God's five-day work he would accept,
But let the rest go by.

XII

He cried—"O touching, patient Earth,
That weepst in thy glee!
Whom God created very good,
And very mournful, we!
Thy voice of moan doth reach His
throne,
As Abel's rose from thee.

XIII

"Poor crystal sky, with stars astray!
Mad winds, that howling go
From east to west! perplex'd seas,
That stagger from their blow!
O motion wild! O wave defiled!
Our curse hath made you so.

XIV

"We! and our curse! Do I partake
The desiccating sin?
Have I the apple at my lips?
The money-lust within?
Do I human stand with the wounding
hand,
To the blasting heart akin?

XV

"Thou solemn pathos of all things,
For solemn joy designed!
Behold, submissive to your cause
An holy wrath I find,
And, for your sake, the bondage break,
That knits me to my kind.

XVI

"Hear me forswear man's sympathies,
His pleasant 'yea' and 'no'—
His riot on the piteous earth
Whereon his thistles grow!
His changing love—with stars above!
His pride—with graves below!

XVII

"Hear me forswear his roof by night,
His bread and salt by day,
His talkings at the wood-fire hearth,
His greetings by the way,
His answering looks, his systemed
books,
All man, for aye and aye.

XVIII

"That so my purged, once human
heart,
From all the human rent,
May gather strength to pledge and
drink
Your wine of wonderment,
While you pardon me, all blessingly,
The woe mine Adam sent.

XIX

"And I shall feel your unseen looks
Innumerable, constant, deep,
And soft as haunted Adam once,
Though sadder, round me creep,—
As slumbering men have mystic ken
Of watchers on their sleep.

XX

"And ever, when I lift my brow
At evening to the sun,
No voice of woman or of child
Recording 'Day is done,'
Your silences shall a love express,
More deep than such an one!"

PART THE SECOND

SHOWING TO WHOM THE VOW WAS
DECLARED

I

The poet's vow was inly sworn—
The poet's vow was told.
He shared among his crowding friends
The silver and the gold,—
They clasping bland his gift,—his
hand,
In a somewhat slacker hold.

II

They wended forth, the crowding
friends,
With farewells smooth and kind—
They wended forth, the solaced
friends,
And left but twain behind:
One loved him true as brothers do,
And one was Rosalind.

III

He said—"My friends have wended
forth
With farewells smooth and kind.
Mine oldest friend, my plighted bride,
Ye need not stay behind.
Friend, wed my fair bride for my
sake,—
And let my lands ancestral make
A dower for Rosalind.

IV

"And when beside your wassail board
Ye bless your social lot,
I charge you that the giver be
In all his gifts forgot!
Or alone of all his words recall
The last,—'Lament me not'."

V

She looked upon him silently,
 With her large, doubting eyes,
 Like a child that never knew but love,
 Whom words of wrath surprise ;
 Till the rose did break from either
 cheek,
 And the sudden tears did rise.

VI

She looked upon him mournfully,
 While her large eyes were grown
 Yet larger with the steady tears,
 Till, all his purpose known,
 She turned slow, as she would
 go—
 The tears were shaken down.—

VII

She turned slow, as she would go,
 Then quickly turned again ;
 And gazing in his face to seek
 Some little touch of pain—
 "I thought," she said,—but shook
 her head,—
 She tried that speech in vain.

VIII

"I thought—but I am half a child,
 And very sage art thou—
 The teachings of the heaven and earth
 Should keep us soft and low.
 They have drawn *my* tears, in early
 years,
 Or ere I wept—as now.

IX

"But now that in thy face I read
 Their cruel homily,
 Before their beauty I would fain
 Untouched, unsoftened be,—
 If I indeed could look on even
 The senseless, loveless earth and
 heaven,
 As *thou* canst look on *me*.

X

"And couldst thou as coldly view
 Thy childhood's far abode,
 Where little feet kept time with thine
 Along the dewy sod ?
 And thy mother's look from holy book
 Rose, like a thought of God ?

XI

"O brother,—called so, ere her last
 Betrothing words were said !
 O fellow-watcher in her room,
 With hushed voice and tread !

Rememberest thou how, hand in
 hand,
 O friend, O lover, we did stand,
 And knew that she was dead ?

XII

"I will not live Sir Roland's bride,—
 That dower I will not hold !
 I tread below my feet that go,
 These parchments bought and sold.
 The tears I weep, are mine to keep,
 And worthier than thy gold."

XIII

The poet and Sir Roland stood
 Alone, each turned to each ;
 Till Roland brake the silence left
 By that soft-throbbing speech—
 "Poor heart ! " he cried, "it vainly
 tried
 The distant heart to reach !

XIV

"And thou, O distant, sinful heart,
 That climbest up so high,
 To wrap and blind thee with the
 snows
 That cause to dream and die—
 What blessing can, from lips of man,
 Approach thee with his sigh ?

XV

"Ay ! what, from earth—create for
 man,
 And moaning in his moan ?
 Ay ! what from stars—revealed to
 man,
 And man-named, one by one ?
 Ay, more ! what blessing can be
 given,
 Where the Spirits seven do show in
 Heaven
 A MAN upon the throne ?—

XVI

"A man on earth He wandered once,
 All meek and undefiled ;
 And those who loved Him, said ' He
 wept '—
 None ever said He smiled,
 Yet there might have been a smile
 unseen,
 When He bowed His blessed face, I
 ween,
 To bless that happy child.

XVII

"And now He pleadeth up in Heaven
 For our humanities,

Till the ruddy light on seraphs' wings
 In pale emotion dies.
 They can better bear His Godhead's
 glare,
 Than the pathos of His eyes.

XVIII

"I will go pray our God to-day
 To teach thee how to scan
 His work divine, for human use
 Since earth on axle ran!
 To teach thee to discern as plain
 His grief divine—the blood-drop's
 stain

He left there, MAN for man.

XIX

"So, for the blood's sake, shed by
 Him,
 Whom angels God declare,
 Tears, like it, moist and warm with
 love,

Thy reverent eyes shall wear,
 To see i' the face of Adam's race
 The nature God doth share."

XX

"I heard," the poet said, "thy voice
 As dimly as thy breath!
 The sound was like the noise of life
 To one anear his death,—
 Or of waves that fail to stir the pale
 Sere leaf they roll beneath.

XXI

"And still between the sound and me
 White creatures like a mist
 Did interfloat confusedly,—
 Mysterious shapes unwist!
 Across my heart and across my brow
 I felt them droop like wreaths of snow,
 To still the pulse they kist.

XXII

"The castle and its lands are thine—
 The poor's—it shall be done.
 Go, man, to love! I go to live
 In Courland hall, alone.
 The bats along the ceilings cling,—
 The lizards in the floors do run,—
 And storms and years have worn and
 reft

The stain by human builders left
 In working at the stone!"

PART THE THIRD

SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS KEPT

I

He dwelt alone, and, sun and moon,
 Were witness that he made

Rejection of his humanness
 Until they seemed to fade.
 His face did so; for he did grow
 Of his own soul afraid.

II

The self-poised God may dwell a'one
 With inward glorying,
 But God's chief angel waiteth for
 A brother's voice, to sing,—
 And a lonely creature of sinful nature—
 It is an awful thing.

III

An awful thing that feared itself
 While many years did roll,—
 A lonely man, a feeble man,—
 A part beneath the whole—
 He bore by day, he bore by night
 That pressure of God's infinite
 Upon his finite soul.

IV

The poet at his lattice sate,
 And downwardly looked he:
 Three Christians wended by to
 prayers,

With mute ones in their ee.
 Each turned above a face of love,
 And called him to the far chapelle
 With voice more tuneless than its bell—
 But still they wended three.

V

There journeyed by a bridal pomp,
 A bridegroom and his dame:
 She speaketh low for happiness,
 She blusheth red for shame,—
 But never a tone of benison
 From out the lattice came.

*VI

A little child with inward song,
 No louder noise to dare,
 Stood near the wall to see at play
 The lizards green and rare—
 Unblessed the while for his childish
 smile
 Which cometh unaware.

PART THE FOURTH

SHOWING HOW ROSALIND FARED BY
 THE KEEPING OF THE VOW

I

In death-sheets lieth Rosalind,
 As white and still as they;
 And the old nurse that watched her
 bed,
 Rose up with "Well-a-day!"

And oped the casement to let in
The sun, and that sweet doubtful din
Which droppeth from the grass and
bough

Sans wind and bird—none knoweth
how—

To cheer her as she lay.

II

The old nurse started when she saw
Her sudden look of woe!

But the quick wan tremblings round
her mouth

In a meek smile did go,
And calm she said, "When I am dead,
Dear nurse, it shall be so.

III

"Till then, shut out those sights and
sounds,

And pray God pardon me
That I without this pain, no more
His blessed works can see!

And lean beside me, loving nurse,
That thou mayst hear, ere I am worse,
What thy last love should be."

IV

The loving nurse leant over her,
As white she lay beneath;

The old eyes searching, dim with life,
The young ones dim with death,

To read their book if sound forsook
The trying, trembling breath.—

V

"When all this feeble breath is done,
And I on bier am laid,

My tresses smoothed for never a feast,
My body in shroud arrayed;

Uplift each palm in a saintly calm,
As if that still I prayed.

VI

"And heap beneath mine head the
flowers

You stoop so low to pull,—

The little white flowers from the wood,
Which grow there in the cool;

Which *he* and I, in childhood's games,
Went plucking, knowing not their
names,

And filled thine apron full.

VII

"Weep not! I weep not. Death is
strong,

The eyes of Death are dry!

E.P.

But lay this scroll upon my breast
When hushed its heavings lie,
And wait awhile for the corpse's smile
Which shineth presently.

VIII

"And when it shineth, straightway
call

Thy youngest children dear,

And bid them gently carry me

All barefaced on the bier—

But bid them pass my kirkyard grass
That waveth long anear.

IX

"And up the bank where I used to sit
And dream what life would be,

Along the brook, with its sunny look
Akin to living glee,—

O'er the windy hill, through the forest
still,

Let them gently carry me.

X

"And through the piney forest still,
And down the open moorland—

Round where the sea beats mistily
And blindly on the foreland—

And let them chant that hymn I
know,

Bearing me soft, bearing me slow,
To the ancient hall of Courland.

XI

"And when withal they near the hall,
In silence let them lay

My bier before the bolted door,

And leave it for a day:

For I have vowed, though I am proud,
To go there as a guest in shroud,

And not be turned away."

XII

The old nurse looked within her eyes,
Whose mutual look was gone;

The old nurse stooped upon her
mouth,

Whose answering voice was done;
And naught she heard, till a little
bird

Upon the casement's woodbine
swinging,

Broke out into a loud sweet singing
For joy o' the summer sun.

"Alack! alack!"—she watched no
more—

With head on knee she wailed
sore.

H

And the little bird sang o'er and o'er
For joy o' the summer sun.

PART THE FIFTH

SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS BROKEN

I

The poet oped his bolted door,
The midnight sky to view.
A spirit-feel was in the air
Which seemed to touch his spirit
bare

Whenever his breath he drew;
And the stars a liquid softness had,
As alone their holiness forbade
Their falling with the dew.

II

They shine upon the steadfast hills,
Upon the swinging tide,
Upon the narrow track of beach,
And the murmuring pebbles pied.
They shine on every lovely place—
They shine upon the corpse's face,
As *it* were fair beside.

III

It lay before him, humanlike,
Yet so unlike a thing!
More awful in its shrouded pomp
Than any crownèd king.
All calm and cold, as it did hold
Some secret, glorying.

IV

A heavier weight than of its clay
Clung to his heart and knee.
As if those folded palms could strike,
He staggered groaningly,
And then o'erhung, without a groan,
The meek close mouth that smiled
alone,
Whose speech the scroll must be.

THE WORDS OF ROSALIND'S SCROLL

"I LEFT thee last, a child at heart,
A woman scarce in years.
I come to thee, a solemn corpse,
Which neither feels nor fears.
I have no breath to use in sighs.
They laid the death-weights on mine
eyes,

To seal them safe from tears.

"Look on me with thine own calm
look—

I meet it calm as thou!

Nolook of thine can change *this* smile,
Or break thy sinful vow.

I tell thee that my poor scorned heart
Is of thine earth . . . thine earth—
a part—

It cannot love thee now.

"But out, alas! these words are writ
By a living, loving one,
Adown whose cheeks, the proofs of
life,

The warm, quick tears do run.
Ah, let the unloving corpse controul
Thy scorn back from the loving soul,
Whose place of rest is won.

"I have prayed for thee with bitter
sobs,

When passion's course was free!
I have prayed for thee with silent
lips,

In the anguish none could see!
They whispered oft, 'She sleepeth
soft'—

But I only prayed for thee.

"Go to! I pray for thee no more—
The corpse's tongue is still.

Its folded fingers point to heaven,
But point there stiff and chill.
No farther wrong, no farther woe
Hath licence from the sin below.
Its tranquil heart to thrill.

"I charge thee, by the living's prayer,
And the dead's silentness,
To wring from out thy soul a cry
Which God shall hear and bless!
Lest Heaven's own palm droop in my
hand,
And pale among the saints I stand,
A saint companionless."

V

Bow lower down before the throne,
Triumphant Rosalind!
He boweth on thy corpse his face,
And weepeth as the blind.
'Twas a dread sight to see them so—
For the senseless corpse rocked to
and fro,
With the wail of his living mind.

VI

But dreadier sight, could such be seen,
His inward mind did lie;
Whose long-subjected humanness

Gave out its lion cry,
And fiercely rent its tenement
In a mortal agony.

VII

I tell you, friends, had you heard his
wail,
'Twould haunt you in court and
mart,
And in merry feast, until you set
Your cup down to depart—
That weeping wild of a reckless child
From a proud man's broken heart!

VIII

O broken heart! O broken vow,
That wore so proud a feature!
God, grasping as a thunderbolt
The man's rejected nature,
Smote him therewith—"I" the presence
high
Of his so worshipped earth and sky
That looked on all indifferently—
A wailing human creature.

IX

A human creature found too weak
To bear his human pain—
(May Heaven's dear grace have spoken
peace
To his dying heart and brain!)
For when they came at dawn of day
To lift the lady's corpse away,
Her bier was holding twain.

X

They dug beneath the kirkyard grass,
For both, one dwelling deep:
And, after years had mossed the
stone,
Sir Roland brought his little son
To watch the funeral heap.
And, when the happy boy would
rather
Turn upward his blithe eyes to see
The wood-doves nodding from the
tree—
"Nay, boy, look downward," said
his father,
"Upon this human dust asleep.
And hold it in thy constant ken,
That God's own unity compresses
(One into one) the human many,
And that His everlastingness is
The bond which is not loosed by
any.
That thou and I this law must keep,

If not in love, in sorrow then!
Though smiling not like other men,
Still, like them, we must weep."

THE ROMAUNT OF MARGRET

Can my affections find out nothing best,
But still and still remove?—
Quarles.

I

I PLANT a tree whose leaf
The yew-tree leaf will suit.
But when its shade is o'er you laid,
Turn round and pluck the fruit!
Now reach my harp from off the wall
Where shines the sun aslant:
The sun may shine and we be cold—
O hearken, loving hearts and bold,
Unto my wild romaunt,
Margret, Margret.

II

Sitteth the fair ladye
Close to the river side,
Which runneth on with a merry tone,
Her merry thoughts to guide.
It runneth through the trees,
It runneth by the hill,
Nathless the lady's thoughts have
found
A way more pleasant still.
Margret, Margret.

III

The night is in her hair,
And giveth shade to shade,
And the pale moonlight on her fore-
head white
Like a spirit's hand is laid.
Her lips part with a smile,
Instead of speakings done—
I ween, she thinketh of a voice,
Albeit uttering none.
Margret, Margret.

IV

All little birds do sit
With heads beneath their wings:
Nature doth seem in a mystic dream,
Absorbed from her living things.
That dream by that ladye
Is certes unpartook,
For she looketh to the high cold stars
With a tender human look.
Margret, Margret.

V

The lady's shadow lies
Upon the running river:

It lieth no less in its quietness,
 For that which resteth never.
 Most like a trusting heart
 Upon a passing faith,—
 On as, upon the course of life,
 The steadfast doom of death.
 Margret, Margret.

VI

The lady doth not move,
 The lady doth not dream,—
 Yet she seeth her shade no longer laid
 In rest upon the stream!
 It shaketh without wind,
 It parteth from the tide;
 It standeth upright in the cleft moon-
 light—
 It sitteth at her side.
 Margret, Margret.

VII

Look in its face, ladye,
 And keep thee from thy swound!
 With a spirit bold, thy pulses hold,
 And hear its voice's sound!
 For so will sound thy voice,
 When thy face is to the wall!
 And such will be thy face, ladye,
 When the maidens work thy
 pall—
 Margret, Margret.

VIII

"Am I not like to thee?"—
 The voice was calm and low—
 And between each word you might
 have heard
 The silent forests grow.
"The like may sway the like!"
 By which mysterious law,
 Mine eyes from thine and my lips
 from thine
 The light and breath may draw,
 Margret, Margret.

IX

"My lips do need thy breath,
 My lips do need thy smile,
 And my pale deep eyne, that light in
 thine
 Which met the stars erewhile.
 Yet go with light and life,
 If that thou lovest one
 In all the earth, who loveth thee
 As truly as the sun,
 Margret, Margret."

Her cheek had waxed white,
 Like cloud at fall of snow;
 Then like to one at set of sun,
 It waxed red also;
 For love's name maketh bold,
 As if the loved were near!
 And then she sighed the deep long sigh
 Which cometh after fear.
 Margret, Margret.

XI

"Now, sooth, I fear thee, not—
 Shall never fear thee now!"
 (And a noble sight was the sudden
 light
 Which lit her lifted brow.)
 "Can earth be dry of streams;
 Or hearts, of love?" she said—
 "Who doubteth love, can know not
 love:
 He is already dead."
 Margret, Margret.

XII

"I have" . . . and here her lips
 Some word in pause did keep,
 And gave the while a quiet smile,
 As if they paused in sleep,—
 "I have . . . a brother dear,
 A knight of knightly fame!
 I broidered him a knightly scarf
 With letters of my name.
 Margret, Margret.

XIII

"I fed his grey gos hawk,
 I kissed his fierce bloodhound,
 I sate at home when he might come
 And caught his horn's far sound:
 I sang him hunter's songs,
 I poured him the red wine—
 He looked across the cup, and said,
'I love thee, sister mine.'"
 Margret, Margret.

XIV

It trembled on the grass,
 With a low, shadowy laughter.
 The sounding river which rolled for
 ever,
 Stood dumb and stagnant after.
 "Brave knight thy brother is!
 But better loveth he
 Thy chaliced wine than thy chanted
 song,
 And better both, than thee,
 Margret, Margret."

xv

The lady did not heed
 The river's silence, while
 Her own thoughts still ran at their
 will,
 And calm was still her smile.
 "My little sister wears
 The look our mother wore :
 I smooth her locks with a golden
 comb—
 I bless her evermore.
 Margret, Margret."

xvi

"I gave her my first bird,
 When first my voice it knew ;
 I made her share my posies rare,
 And told her where they grew :
 I taught her God's dear name
 With prayer and praise, to tell—
 She looked from heaven into my face,
 And said, '*I love thee well*.'
 Margret, Margret."

xvii

It trembled on the grass,
 With a low, shadowy laughter :
 You could see each bird as it woke
 and stared
 Through the shrivelled foliage after.
 "Fair child thy sister is !
 But better loveth she
 Thy golden comb than thy gathered
 flowers—
 And better both, than thee,
 Margret, Margret."

xviii

The lady did not heed
 The withering on the bough :
 Still calm her smile, albeit the while
 A little pale her brow.
 "I have a father old,
 The lord of ancient halls :
 An hundred friends are in his court,
 Yet only me he calls.
 Margret, Margret."

xix

"An hundred knights are in his
 court,
 Yet read I by his knee ;
 And when forth they go to the tour-
 ney show,
 I rise not up to see.
 'Tis a weary book to read—
 My tryst's at set of sun—

But loving and dear beneath the stars
 Is his blessing when I've done."
 Margret, Margret.

xx

It trembled on the grass,
 With a low, shadowy laughter.
 And moon and star though bright and
 far
 Did shrink and darken after.
 "High lord thy father is !
 But better loveth he
 His ancient halls than his hundred
 friends,—
 His ancient halls, than thee,
 Margret, Margret."

xxi

The lady did not heed
 That the far stars did fail :
 Still calm her smile, albeit the while ...
 Nay, but she is not pale !
 "I have a more than friend
 Across the mountains dim :
 No other's voice is soft to me,
 Unless it nameth *him*."
 Margret, Margret.

xxii

"Though louder beats mine heart,
 I know his tread again—
 And his far plume aye, unless turned
 away,
 For the tears do blind me then.
 We brake no gold, a sign
 Of stronger faith to be ;—
 But I wear his last look in my soul,
 Which said, '*I love but thee !*'
 Margret, Margret."

xxiii

It trembled on the grass,
 With a low, shadowy laughter.
 And the wind did toll, as a passing soul
 Were sped by church-bell, after :
 And shadows, 'stead of light,
 Fell from the stars above,
 In flakes of darkness on her face
 Still bright with trusting love.
 Margret, Margret.

xxiv

"He loved but only thee !
 That love is transient too.
 The wild hawk's bill doth dabble still
 I' the mouth that vowed thee true,
 Will he open his dull eyes,
 When tears fall on his brow ?

Behold, the death-worm to his heart
Is a nearer thing than *thou*,
Margret, Margret."

xxv

Her face was on the ground—
None saw the agony!
But the men at sea did that night agree
They heard a drowning cry.
And when the morning brake,
Fast rolled the river's tide,
With the green trees waving overhead,
And a white corse laid beside.
Margret, Margret.

xxvi

A knight's bloodhound and he
The funeral watch did keep.
With a thought o' the chase he
stroked its face
As it howled to see him weep.
A fair child kissed the dead,
But shrank before the cold.
And alone yet proudly in his hall
Did stand a baron old.
Margret, Margret.

xxvii

Hang up my harp again—
I have no voice for song.
Not song but wail, and mourners pale
Not bards, to love belong.
O failing human love!
O light, by darkness known!
O false, the while thou treadest earth!
O deaf, beneath the stone!
Margret, Margret.

ISOBEL'S CHILD

—so find we profit,
By losing of our prayers.
—*Shakespeare.*

I

To rest the weary nurse has gone,
An eight-day watch had watched
she,
Still rocking beneath sun and moon
The baby on her knee;
Till Isobel its mother said
"The fever waneth—wend to bed—
For now the watch comes round to
me."

II

Then wearily the nurse did throw
Her pallet in the darkest place
Of that sick room, and slept, and
dreamed.

For, as the gusty wind did blow
The night-lamp's flare across her
face,
She saw, or seemed to see, but
dreamed,
That the poplars tall on the opposite
hill,
The seven tall poplars on the hill,
Did clasp the setting sun until
His rays dropped from him, pined
and still

As blossoms in frost!
Till he waned and paled, so weirdly
crossed,
To the colour of moonlight which
doth pass
Over the dank ridged churchyard
grass.
The poplars held the sun, and he
The eyes of the nurse, that they should
not see,
Not for a moment, the babe on her
knee,
Though she shuddered to feel that it
grew to be
Too chill, and lay too heavily.

III

She only dreamed : for all the while
'Twas Lady Isobel that kept
The little baby,—and it slept
Fast, warm, as if its mother's smile,
Laden with love's dewy weight,
And red as a rose of Harpocrate,
Dropt upon its eyelids, pressed
Lashes to cheek in a sealed rest.

IV

And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well—
She knew not that she smiled.
Against the lattice, dull and wild,
Drive the heavy droning drops,
Drop by drop, the sound being
one—

As momentarily time's segments fall
On the ear of God, Who hears
through all

Eternity's unbroken monotone.
And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well—

She knew not that she smiled.
The wind in intermission stops
Down in the beechen forest,
Then cries aloud
As one at the sorest,
Self-stung, self-driven,

And rises up to its very tops,
 Stiffening erect the branches
 bowed,—
 Dilating with a tempest-soul
 The trees that with their dark
 hands break
 Through their own outline and heavily
 roll
 Shadows as massive as clouds in
 heaven,
 Across the castle lake.
 And more and more smiled Isobel
 To see the baby sleep so well;
 She knew not that she smiled.—
 She knew not that the storm was
 wild.
 Through the uproar drear she could
 not hear
 The castle clock which struck anear—
 She heard the low, light breathing of
 her child.

V

O sight for wondering look !
 While the external nature broke
 Into such abandonment,—
 While the very mist heart-rent
 By the lightning, seemed to eddy
 Against nature, with a din—
 A sense of silence and of steady
 Natural calm appeared to come
 From things without, and enter in
 The human creature's room.

VI

So motionless she sate,
 The babe asleep upon her knees,
 You might have dreamed their
 souls had gone
 Away to things inanimate,
 In such to live, in such to moan ;
 And that their bodies had ta'en back,
 In mystic change, all silences
 That cross the sky in cloudy rack,
 Or dwell beneath the reedy ground
 In waters safe from their own sound.
 Only she wore
 The deepening smile I named before,
 And *that* a deepening love expressed—
 And who at once can love and rest ?

VII

In sooth the smile that then was
 keeping
 Watch upon the baby sleeping,
 Floated with its tender light

Downward, from the drooping eyes,
 Upward, from the lips apart,
 Over cheeks which had grown white
 With an eight-day weeping.
 All smiles come in such a wise,
 Where tears shall fall, or have of old—
 Like northern lights that fill the
 heart
 Of heaven in sign of cold.

VIII

Motionless she sate :
 Her hair had fallen by its weight
 On each side of her smile, and lay
 Very blackly on the arm
 Where the baby nestled warm,—
 Pale as baby carved in stone
 Seen by glimpses of the moon
 Up a dark cathedral aisle !
 But, through the storm, no moonbeam
 fell
 Upon the child of Isobel—
 Perhaps you saw it by the ray
 Alone of her still smile.

IX

A solemn thing it is to me
 To look upon a babe that sleeps—
 Wearing in its spirit-deeps
 The undeveloped mystery
 Of our Adam's taint and woe,
 Which, when they revealed be,
 Will not let it slumber so !
 Lying new in life beneath
 The shadow of the coming death,
 With that soft, low, quiet breath,
 As if it felt the sun !
 Knowing all things by their
 blooms,
 Not their roots, yea,—sun and sky,
 Only by the warmth that comes
 Out of each,—earth, only by
 The pleasant hues that o'er it run,—
 And human love, by drops of sweet
 White nourishment still hanging
 round
 The little mouth so slumber-bound.
 All which broken sentience
 And conclusion incomplete,
 Will gather and unite and climb
 To an immortality
 Good or evil, each sublime,
 Through life and death to life again !
 O little lids, now folded fast,
 Must ye learn to drop at last
 Our large and burning tears ?

O warm quick body, must thou lie,
 When the time comes round to die,
 Still, from all the whirl of years,
 Bare of all the joy and pain?—
 O small frail being, wilt thou stand
 At God's right hand,—
 Lifting up those sleeping eyes,
 Dilated by sublimest destinies,
 To an endless waking? Thrones and
 seraphim,
 Through the long ranks of their
 solemnities,
 Sunning thee with calm looks of
 Heaven's surprise—

Thy look alone on *Him*?—
 Or else, self-willed to tread the God-
 less place,
 (God keep thy will!) feel thine own
 energies,
 Cold, strong, objectless, like a dead
 man's clasp,
 The sleepless deathless life within
 thee, grasp,—
 While myriad faces, like one change-
 less face,
 With woe *not love's*, shall glass thee
 everywhere,
 And overcome thee with thine own
 despair?

x

More soft, less solemn images
 Drifted o'er the lady's heart,
 Silently as snow.
 She had seen eight days depart
 Hour by hour, on bended knees,
 With pale-wrung hands and prayings
 low
 And broken—through which came
 the sound
 Of tears that fell against the ground,
 Making sad stops:—"Dear Lord,
 dear Lord!"
 She still had prayed—(the heavenly
 word,
 Broken by an earthly sigh)—
 "Thou, Who didst not erst deny
 The mother-joy to Mary mild,
 Blessed in the Blessed Child,
 Which hearkened in meek babyhood
 Her cradle-hymn, albeit used
 To all that music interfused
 In breasts of angels high and good!
 Oh, take not, Lord, my babe away—
 Oh, take not to Thy songful heaven,
 The pretty baby Thou hast given,

Or ere that I have seen him play
 Around his father's knees, and known
 That *he* knew how my love has gone
 From all the world to him.

Think, God among the cherubim,
 How I shall shiver every day
 In Thy June sunshine, knowing where
 The grave-grass keeps it from his
 fair

Still cheeks! and feel at every tread
 His little body which is dead
 And hidden in the turfy fold,
 Doth make the whole warm earth
 a-cold!

O God, I am so young, so young—
 I am not used to tears at nights
 Instead of slumber—nor to prayer
 With shaken lips and hands out-
 wrung!

Thou knowest all my prayings were,
 'I bless Thee, God, for past delights—
 Thank God!' I am not used to bear
 Hard thoughts of death. The earth
 doth cover

No face from me of friend or lover:
 And must the first who teaches me
 The form of shrouds and funerals, be
 Mine own first-born beloved? he
 Who taught me first this mother-
 love?

Dear Lord, Who spreadest out above
 Thy loving, transpierced hands to
 meet

All lifted hearts with blessing sweet,—
 Pierce not my heart, my tender
 heart,

Thou madest tender! Thou who art
 So happy in Thy heaven away,
 Take not mine only bliss away!"

xi

She so had prayed: and God, Who
 hears

Through seraph-songs the sound of
 tears,

From that beloved babe had ta'en
 The fever and the beating pain.
 And more and more smiled Isobel
 To see the baby sleep so well—

She knew not that she smiled I wis
 Until the pleasant gradual thought
 Which near her heart, the smile,
 enwrought,

Now soft and slow, itself, did seem
 To float along a happy dream.

Beyond it, into speech like this—

XII

"I prayed for thee, my little child,
And God has heard my prayer!
And when thy babyhood is gone,
We two together undefiled
By men's repinings, will kneel down
Upon His earth, which will be fair
(Not covering thee, sweet!) to us
twain,
And give Him thankful praise."

XIII

Dully and wildly drives the rain:
Against the lattices drives the rain.

XIV

"I thank Him now, that I can think
Of those same future days,
Nor from the harmless image shrink
Of what I there might see—
Strange babies on their mothers' knee,
Whose innocent soft faces might
From off mine eyelids strike the light,
With looks not meant for me!"

XV

Gustily blows the wind through the
rain,
As against the lattices drives the rain.

XVI

"But now, O baby mine, together,
We turn this hope of ours again
To many an hour of summer weather
When we shall sit and intertwine
Our spirits, and instruct each other
In the pure loves of child and
mother!—
Two human loves make one divine."

XVII

The thunder tears through the wind
and the rain,
As full on the lattices drives the
rain.

XVIII

"My little child, what wilt thou
choose?
Let me look at thee and ponder.
What gladness, from the gladnesses
Futurity is spreading under
Thy gladsome sight? Beneath the
trees,
Wilt thou lean all day, and lose
Thy spirit with the river seen
Intermittently between

The winding beechen alleys?
Half in labour, half repose,
Like a shepherd keeping sheep,
Thou, with only thoughts to keep
Which never a bound will overpass,
And which are innocent as those
That feed among Arcadian valleys
Upon the dewy grass?"

XIX

The large white owl that with age is
blind,
That hath sate for years in the old
tree hollow,
Is carried away in a gust of wind!
His wings could bear him not as fast
As he goeth now the lattice past—
He is borne by the winds; the rains
do follow:
His white wings to the blast out-
flowing,
He hooteth in going,
And still in the lightnings, coldly
glitter
His round unblinking eyes.

XX

"Or, baby, wilt thou think it fitter
To be eloquent and wise?
One upon whose lips the air
Turns to solemn verities,
For men to breathe anew, and win
A deeper-seated life within?
Wilt be a philosopher,
By whose voice the earth and skies
Shall speak to the unborn?
Or a poet, broadly spreading
The golden immortalities
Of thy soul on natures lorn
And poor of such, them all to guard
From their decay? beneath thy
treading,
Earth's flowers recovering hues of
Eden?
And stars, drawn downward by thy
looks
To shine ascendant in thy books?"

XXI

The tame hawk in the castle-yard,
How it screams to the lightning, with
its wet
Jagged plumes overhanging the
parapet!
And at the lady's door the hound
Scratches with a crying sound!

XXII

"But, O my babe, thy lids are laid
Close, fast upon thy cheek,—
And not a dream of power and sheen
Can make a passage up between!
Thy heart is of thy mother's m^a's,
Thy looks are very meek!
And it will be their chosen place
To rest on some beloved face,
As these on thine—and let the noise
Of the whole world go on, nor drown
The tender silence of thy joys.
Or when that silence shall have grown
Too tender for itself, the same
Yearning for sound,—to look above,
And utter its one meaning, Love,—
That *He* may hear His name!"

XXIII

No wind—no rain—no thunder!
The waters had trickled not slowly,
The thunder was not spent
Nor the wind near finishing.
Who would have said that the storm
was diminishing?
No wind—no rain—no thunder!
Their noises dropped asunder
From the earth and the firmament,
From the towers and the lattices,
Abrupt and echoless,
As ripe fruits on the ground, unshaken
wholly—
As life in death!
And sudden and solemn the silence
fell,
Startling the heart of Isobel,
As the tempest could not!
Against the door went panting the
breath
Of the lady's hound whose cry was
still—
And *she*, constrained howe'er she
would not,
Lifted her eyes, and saw the moon
Looking out of heaven alone
Upon the poplared hill,—
A calm of God, made visible,
That men might bless it at their
will.

XXIV

The moonshine on the baby's face
Falleth clear and cold.
The mother's looks have fallen back
To the same place:
Because no moon with silver rack,

Nor broad sunrise in jasper skies,
Have power to hold
Our loving eyes,
Which still revert, as ever must
Wonder and Hope, to gaze on the
dust.

XXV

The moonshine on the baby's face
Cold and clear remaineth!
The mother's looks do shrink away,—
The mother's looks return to stay,
As charmed by what paineth.
Is any glamour in the case?
Is it dream or is it sight?
Hath the change upon the wild
Elements, that signs the night,
Passed upon the child?
It is not dream, but sight!—

XXVI

The babe has awakened from sleep,
And unto the gaze of its mother,
Bent over it, lifted another!
Not the baby-looks that go
Unaimingly to and fro,
But an earnest gazing deep,
Such as soul gives soul at length,
When, by work and wail of years,
It winneth a solemn strength,
And mourneth as it wears!
A strong man could not brook
With pulse unhurried by fears,
To meet that baby's look
O'erglazed by manhood's tears—
The tears of the man full grown,
With the power to wring our own,
In the eyes all undefiled
Of a little three-months' child!
To see that babe-brow wrought
By the witnessing of thought,
To judgment's prodigy!
And the small soft mouth unweaned,
By mother's kiss o'erleaned
(Putting the sound of loving
Where no sound else was moving
Except the speechless cry)
Quickened to mind's expression,
Shaped to articulation,
Yea, speaking words—yea, naming
woe,
In tones that with it strangely went,
Because so baby-innocent,
As the child spake out to the mother
so!—

XXVII

"O mother, mother, loose thy prayer!
Christ's name hath made it strong!
It bindeth me, it holdeth me
With its most loving cruelty,
From floating my new soul along
The happy heavenly air!
It bindeth me, it holdeth me
In all this dark, upon this dull
Low earth, by only weepers trod!—
It bindeth me, it holdeth me!—
Mine angel, looketh sorrowful
Upon the face of God.¹

XXVIII

"Mother, mother! can I dream
Beneath your earthly trees?
I had a vision and a gleam—
I heard a sound more sweet than these
When rippled by the wind.
Did you see the Dove, with wings
Bathed in golden glistenings
From a sunless light behind,
Dropping on me from the sky,
Soft as mother's kiss, until
I seemed to leap, and yet was still?
Saw you how His love-large eye
Looked upon me mystic calms,
Till the power of His divine
Vision was indrawn to mine?

XXIX

"Oh, the dream within the dream!
I saw celestial places even.
Oh, the vistas of high palms,
Making finites of delight
Through the heavenly infinite—
Lifting up their green still tops
To the heaven of Heaven!
Oh, the sweet life-tree that drops
Shade like light across the river
Glorified in its for ever
Flowing from the Throne!
Oh, the shining holinesses
Of the thousand, thousand faces
God-sunned by the thronéd ONE!
And made intense with such a love,
That though I saw them turned
above,
Each loving seemed for also me!
And, oh, the Unspeakable! the HE,—
The manifest in secrecies,
Yet of mine own heart partaker!

¹ "For I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven."—Matt. xviii. 10.

With the overcoming look
Of One Who hath been once forsook,
And blesseth the forsaker.
Mother, mother, let me go
Toward the Face that looketh so.
Through the mystic, wingéd Four,
Whose are inward, outward eyes
Dark with light of mysteries,
And the restless evermore
'Holy, holy, holy,'—through
The sevenfold Lamps that burn in
view
Of cherubim and seraphim,—
Through the four-and-twenty crowned
Stately elders, white around,—
Suffer me to go to Him!

XXX

"Is your wisdom very wise,
Mother, on the narrow earth?
Very happy, very worth
That I should stay to learn?
Are these air-corrupting sighs
Fashioned by unlearned breath?
Do the students' lamps that burn
All night, illumine death?
Mother, albeit this be so,
Loose thy prayer, and let me go
Where that bright chief angel stands
Apart from all his brother bands,
Too glad for smiling! having bent
In angelic wilderment
O'er the depths of God, and brought
Reeling, thence, one only thought
To fill his whole eternity.
He the teacher is for me!—
He can teach what I would know—
Mother, mother, let me go!—

XXXI

"Can your poet make an Eden
No winter will undo?
And light a starry fire while heeding
His hearth's is burning too?
Drown in music the earth's din?—
And keep his own wild soul within
The law of his own harmony?—
Mother! albeit this be so,
Let me to my Heaven go!
A little harp me waits thereby—
A harp whose strings are golden all,
And tuned to music spherical,
Hanging on the green life-tree,
Where no willows ever be.
Shall I miss that harp of mine?
Mother, no!—the Eye divine

Turned upon it, makes it shine—
And when I touch it, poems sweet
Like separate souls shall fly from it,
Each to an immortal fytte.
We shall all be poets there,
Gazing on the chiefest Fair!

XXXII

"Love! earth's love! and *can* we
love
Fixedly where all things move?
Can the sinning love each other?
Mother, mother,
I tremble in thy close embrace—
I feel thy tears adown my face—
Thy prayers do keep me out of bliss—
O dreary earthly love!
Loose thy prayer, and let me go
To the place which loving is,
Yet not sad! and when is given
Escape to *thee* from this below,
Thou shalt behold me that I wait
For thee beside the happy Gate,
And silence shall be up in Heaven
To hear our greeting kiss."

XXXIII

The nurse awakes in the morning sun,
And starts to see beside her bed
The lady, with a grandeur spread
Like pathos, o'er her face,—as one
God-satisfied and earth-undone.—
The babe upon her arm was dead!
And the nurse could utter forth no
cry,—
She was awed by the calm in the
mother's eye.

XXXIV

"Wake, nurse!"—the lady said:
"We are waking—he and I—
I, on earth, and he, in sky!
And thou must help me to o'erlay
With garment white, this little clay
Which needs no more our lullaby."

XXXV

"I changed the cruel prayer I made,
And bowed my meekened face, and
prayed
That God would do His will! and
thus
He did it, nurse! He parted *us*.
And His sun shows victorious
The dead calm face,—and *I* am
calm;

And Heaven is hearkening a new
psalm.

XXXVI

"This earthly noise is too anear,
Too loud, and will not let me hear
The little harp. My death will soon
Make silence."

And a sense of tune,
A satisfied love, meanwhile,
Which nothing earthly could despoil,
Sang on within her soul.

XXXVII

Oh you,
Earth's tender and impassioned few,
Take courage to entrust your love
To Him so Named, Who guards above
Its ends and shall fulfil!
Breaking the narrow prayers that
may
Befit your narrow hearts, away
In His broad, loving will.

A ROMANCE OF THE GANGES

I

SEVEN maidens 'neath the midnight
Stand near the river-sea,
Whose water sweepeth white around
The shadow of the tree.
The moon and earth are face to face,
And earth is slumbering deep;
The wave-voice seems the voice of
dreams
That wander through her sleep.
The river floweth on.

II

What bring they 'neath the midnight,
Beside the river-sea?
They bring that human heart,
wherein
No nightly calm can be,—
That droppeth never with the wind,
Nor drieth with the dew:—
Oh, calm it, God! *Thy* calm is
broad
To cover spirits, too.
The river floweth on.

III

The maidens lean them over
The waters, side by side,
And shun each other's deepening eyes,
And gaze adown the tide;

For each within a little boat
A little lamp hath put,
And heaped for freight some lily's
weight
Or scarlet rose half shut.
" The river floweth on.

IV

Of a shell of cocoa carven,
Each little boat is made:
Each carries a lamp, and carries a
flower,
And carries a hope unsaid.
And when the boat hath carried the
lamp
Unquenched, till out of sight,
The maidens are sure that love will
endure,—
But love will fail with light.
The river floweth on.

V

Why, all the stars are ready
To symbolise the soul,
The stars, untroubled by the wind,
Unwearied as they roll;
And yet the soul by instinct sad
Reverts to symbols low—
To that small flame, whose very name
Breathed o'er it, shakes it so!
The river floweth on.

VI

Six boats are on the river,
Seven maidens on the shore,
While still above them steadfastly
The stars shine evermore.
Go, little boats, go soft and safe,
And guard the symbol spark!—
The boats aright go safe and bright
Across the waters dark.
The river floweth on.

VII

The maiden Luti watcheth
Where onwardly they float.
That look in her dilating eyes
"Might seem to drive her boat;
Her eyes still mark the constant
fire,
And kindling unawares
That hopeful while she lets a smile
Creep silent through her prayers.
The river floweth on.

VIII

The smile—where hath it wandered?
She riseth from her knee,

She holds her dark, wet locks away—
There is no light to see!
She cries a quick and bitter cry—
"Nuleeni, launch me thine!
We must have light abroad to-night,
For all the wreck of mine."
The river floweth on.

IX

"I do remember watching
Beside this river-bed,
When on my childish knee was laid
My dying father's head.
I turned mine own, to keep the tears
From falling on his face—
What doth it prove, when Death and
Love
Choose out the self-same place?"
The river floweth on.

X

"They say the dead are joyful,
The death-change here receiving.
Who say—ah, me!—who dare to say
Where joy comes to the living?
Thy boat, Nuleeni! look not sad—
Light up the waters rather!
I weep no faithless lover where
I wept a loving father."
The river floweth on.

XI

"My heart foretold his falsehood
Ere my little boat grew dim:
And though I closed mine eyes to
dream
That one last dream of *him*,
They shall not now be wet to see
The shining vision go:
From earth's cold love, I look above
To the holy house of snow."¹
The river floweth on.

XII

"Come *thou*—thou never knewest
A grief, that thou shouldst fear one;
Thou wearest still the happy look
That shines beneath a dear one!
Thy humming-bird is in the sun,"²

¹ The Hindoo heaven is localised on the summit of Mount Meru—one of the mountains of Himalaya or Himmeleh, which signifies, I believe, in Sanscrit, "the abode of snow," "winter," or "coldness."

² Hamadeva, the Indian god of love, is imagined to wander through the three worlds, accompanied by the humming-bird, cuckoo, and gentle breezes.

Thy cuckoo in the grove ;
And all the three broad worlds, for
thee
Are full of wandering love."
The river floweth on.

XIII

"Why, maiden, dost thou loiter ?
What secret wouldst thou cover ?
That peepul cannot hide thy boat,
And I can guess thy lover :
I heard thee sob his name in sleep . . .
It was a name I knew—
Come, little maid, be not afraid—
But let us prove him true !"
The river floweth on.

XIV

The little maiden cometh—
She cometh shy and slow ;
I ween she seeth through her lids,
They drop adown so low :
Her tresses meet her small bare feet—
She stands and speaketh nought,
Yet blusheth red, as if she said
The name she only thought.
The river floweth on.

XV

She knelt beside the water,
She lighted up the flame,
And o'er her youthful forehead's calm
The fitful radiance came :—
"Go, little boat ; go, soft and safe,
And guard the symbol spark !"
Soft, safe, doth float the little boat
Across the waters dark.
The river floweth on.

XVI

Glad tears her eyes have blinded ;
The light they cannot reach :
She turneth with that sudden smile
She learnt before her speech—
"I do not hear his voice ! the tears
Have dimmed my light away !
But the symbol light will last to-
night—
The love will last for aye."
The river floweth on.

XVII

Then Luti spake behind her—
Outspake she bitterly :

"By the symbol light that lasts to-
night,
Wilt vow a vow to me ?"—
Nuleeni gazeth up her face—
Soft answer maketh she :
"By loves that last when lights are
past,
I vow that vow to thee !"
The river floweth on.

XVIII

An earthly look had Luti,
Though her voice was deep as
prayer—
"The rice is gathered from the plains
To cast upon thine hair !"
But when *he* comes, his marriage-band
Around thy neck to throw,
Thy bride-smile raise to meet his gaze,
And whisper,—"*There is one betrays,
When Luti suffers woe.*"
The river floweth on.

XIX

"And when in seasons after,
Thy little bright-faced son
Shall lean against thy knee, and ask
What deeds his sire hath done,
Press deeper down thy mother-smile
His glossy curls among—
View deep his pretty childish eyes,
And whisper,—"*There is none denies,
When Luti speaks of wrong.*"
The river floweth on.

XX

Nuleeni looked in wonder,
Yet softly answered she—
"By loves that last when lights are
past,
I vowed that vow to thee.
But why glads it thee that a bride-
day be
By a word of *woe* defiled ?
That a word of *wrong* take the cradle-
song
From the ear of a sinless child ?"—
"Why ;" Luti said, and her laugh
was dread,
And her eyes dilated wild—
"That the fair new love may her
bridegroom prove,
And the father shame the child."
The river floweth on.

¹ The casting of rice upon the head, and the fixing of the band or tali about the neck, are parts of the Hindoo marriage ceremonial.

XXI

"Thou flowest still, O river,
 Thou flowest 'neath the moon—
 Thy lily hath not changed a leaf,¹
 Thy charmed lute a tune!
 Hemixed his voice with thine—and *his*
 Was all I heard around;
 But now, beside his chosen bride,
 I hear the river's sound."
 The river floweth on.

XXII

"I gaze upon her beauty,
 Through the tresses that enwreath
 it:
 The light above thy wave, is hers—
 My rest, alone beneath it.
 Oh give me back the dying look
 My father gave thy water!
 Give back!—and let a little love
 O'erwatch his weary daughter!"
 The river floweth on.

XXIII

"Give back!" she hath departed—
 The word is wandering with her,
 And the stricken maidens hear afar
 The step and cry together.
 Frail symbols? None are frail enow
 For mortal joys to borrow!—
 While bright doth float Nuleeni's boat,
 She weepeth, dark with sorrow.
 The river floweth on.

AN ISLAND

"All goeth but Goddis will."—*Old Post.*

I

My dream is of an island place
 Which distant seas keep lonely;
 A little island, on whose face
 The stars are watchers only.
 Those bright still stars! they need
 not seem
 Brighter or stiller in my dream.

II

An island full of hills and dells,
 All rumpled and uneven
 With green recesses, sudden swells,
 And odorous valleys driven
 So deep and straight that always
 there
 The wind is cradled to soft air.

¹ The Ganges is represented as a white woman, with a water lily in her right hand, and in her left a lute.

III

Hills running up to heaven for light
 Through woods that half-way ran!
 As if the wild earth mimicked right
 The wilder heart of man;
 Only it shall be greener far
 And gladder than hearts ever are.

IV

More like, perhaps, that mountain
 piece
 Of Dante's paradise
 Disrupt to an hundred hills like these,
 In falling from the skies—
 Bringing within it, all the roots
 Of heavenly trees, and flowers and
 fruits:

V

For saving where the grey rocks
 strike
 Their javelins up the azure,
 Or where deep fissures, miser-like,
 Hoard up some fountain treasure,—
 (And e'en in them—stoop down and
 hear—
 Leaf sounds with water in your
 ear!)

VI

The place is all awake with trees—
 Limes, myrtles purple-beaded,
 Acacias having drunk the lees
 Of the night-dew, faint-headed;
 And wan, grey olive-woods which seem
 The fittest foliage for a dream.

VII

Trees, trees on all sides! they com-
 bine
 Their plummy shades to throw,
 Through whose clear fruit and
 blossom fine
 Whene'er the sun may go,
 The ground beneath he deeply stains,
 As passing through cathedral panes.

VIII

But little needs this earth of ours
 That shining from above her,
 When many Pleiades of flowers
 (Not one lost) star her over;
 The rays of their unnumbered hues
 Being all refracted by the dews.

IX

Wide-petalled plants that boldly drink
 The Amreeta of the sky,

Shut bells, that, dull with rapture, sink,
And lolling buds, half shy ;
I cannot count them, but between,
Is room for grass and mosses green,

x

And brooks, that glass in different
strengths

All colours in disorder,
Or gathering up their silver lengths
Beside their winding border
Sleep, haunted through the slumber
hidden
By lilies white as dreams in Eden.

xi

Nor think each archèd tree with each
Too closely interlaces
To admit of vistas out of reach,
And broad moon-lighted places
Upon whose sward the antlered deer
May view their double image clear.

xii

For all this island's creature-full,
Kept happy not by halves ;
Wild cows, that at the vine-wreaths
pull,
Then low back at their calves
With tender lowings, to approve
The warm mouths milking them for
love.

xiii

Free gamesome horses, antelopes,
And harmless leaping leopards,
And buffaloes upon the slopes,
And sheep unrulèd by shepherds ;
Hares, lizards, hedgehogs, badgers,
mice,
Snakes, squirrels, frogs, and butter-
flies.

xiv

And birds that live there in a crowd—
Horned owls, rapt nightingales,
Larks bold with heaven, and peacocks
proud,
Self-sphered in those grand tails ;
All creatures glad and safe, I deem ;—
No guns nor springs in my dream !

xv

The island's edges are a-wing
With trees that overbranch
The sea with song-birds welcoming
The curlews to green change,
And doves from half-closed lids espy
The red and purple fish go by.

xvi

One dove is answering in trust
The water every minute,
Thinking so soft a murmur must
Have her mate's cooing in it ;
So softly doth earth's beauty round
Infuse itself in ocean's sound.

xvii

My sanguine soul bounds forwarder
To meet the bounding waves !
Beside them straightway I repair,
To live within the caves ;
And near me two or three may dwell
Whom dreams fantastic please as well.

xviii

Long winding caverns ! glittering far
Into a crystal distance ;
Through clefts of which, shall many
a star
Shine clear without resistance,
And carry down its rays the smell
Of flowers above invisible.

xix

I said that two or three might choose
Their dwelling near mine own :
Those who would change man's voice
and use

For nature's way and tone—
Man's veering heart and careless eyes,
For Nature's steadfast sympathies.

xx

Ourselves, to meet her faithfulness,
Shall play a faithful part ;
Her beautiful shall ne'er address
The monstrous at our heart :
Her musical shall ever touch
Something within us also such.

xxi

Yet shall she not our mistress live,
As doth the moon of ocean,
Though gently as the moon she give
Our thoughts a light and motion :
More like a harp of many lays,
Moving its master while he plays.

xxii

No sod in all that island doth
Yawn open for the dead ;
No wind hath borne a traitor's oath ;
No earth, a mourner's tread ;
We cannot say by stream or shade,
" I suffered *here*,—was *here* betrayed."

XXIII

Our only "farewell" we shall laugh
 To shifting cloud or hour,
 And use our only epitaph
 To some bud turned a flower :
 Our only tears shall serve to prove
 Excess in pleasure or in love.

XXV

Our fancies shall their plumage catch
 From fairest island birds
 Whose eggs let young ones out at
 hatch,

Born singing ! then our words
 Unconsciously shall take the dyes
 Of those prodigious fantasies.

XXV

Yea, soon, no consonant unsmooth
 Our smile-tuned lips shall reach ;
 Sounds sweet as Hellas spake in youth,
 Shall glide into our speech,—
 (What music certes can you find
 As soft as voices which are kind ?)

XXVI

And often by the joy without
 And in us, overcome,
 We, through our musing, shall let float
 Such poems,—sitting dumb,—
 As Pindar might have writ, if he
 Had tended sheep in Arcady ;

XXVII

Or Æschylus—the pleasant fields
 He died in, longer knowing ;
 Or Homer, had men's sins and shields
 Been lost in Meles flowing ;
 Or Poet Plato, had the undim
 Unsetting Godlight broke on him.

XXVIII

Choose me the cave most worthy
 choice,
 To make a place for prayer,
 And I will choose a praying voice
 To pour our spirits there.
 How silverly the echoes run—
 "Thy will be done,"—"Thy will be
 done."

XXIX

Gently yet strangely uttered words !—
 They lift me from my dream.
 The island fadeth with its swards
 That did no more than seem !
 The streams are dry, no sun could
 find—
 The fruits are fallen, without wind !—

B.P.

XXX

So oft the doing of God's will
 Our foolish wills undoeth !
 And yet what idle dream breaks ill,
 Which morning-light subdueth ?
 And who would murmur and mis-
 doubt,
 When God's great sunrise finds him
 out ?

THE DESERTED GARDEN

I MIND me in the days departed,
 How often underneath the sun
 With childish bounds I used to run
 To a garden long deserted.

The beds and walks were vanished
 quite ;
 And wheresoe'er had struck the spade,
 The greenest grasses Nature laid,
 To sanctify her right.

I called the place my wilderness,
 For no one entered there but I.
 The sheep looked in the grass to espy,
 And passed it ne'ertheless.

The trees were interwoven wild,
 And spread their boughs enough about
 To keep both sheep and shepherd out,
 But not a happy child.

Adventurous joy it was for me !
 I crept beneath the boughs, and found
 A circle smooth of mossy ground
 Beneath a poplar-tree.

Old garden rose-trees hedged it in,
 Bedropt with roses waxen-white,
 Well satisfied with dew and light,
 And careless to be seen.

Long years ago, it might befall,
 When all the garden flowers were
 trim,

The grave old gardener prided him
 On these the most of all,—

Some Lady, stately overmuch,
 Here moving with a silken noise,
 Has blushed beside them at the voice
 That likened her to such.

Or these, to make a diadem,
 She often may have plucked and
 twined,
 Half-smiling as it came to mind
 That few would look at them.

I

Oh, little thought that Lady proud,
A child would watch her fair white
rose,

When buried lay her whiter brows,
And silk was changed for shroud !—

Nor thought that gardener (full of
scorns

For men unlearned and simple phrase),
A child would bring it all its praise,
By creeping through the thorns !—

To me upon my low moss seat,
Though never a dream the roses sent
Of science or love's compliment,
I ween they smelt as sweet.

It did not move my grief to see
The trace of human step departed.
Because the garden was deserted,
The blither place for me !

Friends, blame me not ! a narrow ken,
Hath childhood 'twixt the sun and
sward :

We draw the moral afterward—
We feel the gladness then.

And gladdest hours for me did glide
In silence at the rose-tree wall :
A thrush made gladness musical
Upon the other side.

Nor he nor I did e'er incline
To peck or pluck the blossoms white—
How should I know but blossoms
might
Lead lives as glad as mine ?

To make my hermit-home complete,
I brought clear water from the spring
Praised in its own low murmuring,—
And cresses glossy wet.

And so, I thought my likeness grow
(Without the melancholy tale)
To "gentle hermit of the dale,"
And Angelina too.

For oft I read within my nook
Such minstrel stories ! till the breeze
Made sounds poetic in the trees,—
And then I shut the book.

If I shut this wherein I write,
I hear no more the wind athwart
Those trees,—nor feel that childish
heart
Delighting in delight.

My childhood from my life is parted
My footstep from the moss which
drew

Its fairy circle round : anew
The garden is deserted.

Another thrush may there rehearse
The madrigals which sweetest are ;
No more for me !—myself afar
Do sing a sadder verse.

Ah me, ah me ! when erst I lay
In that child's-nest so greenly wrought,
I laughed unto myself and thought
"The time will pass away."

And still I laughed, and did not fear
But that, when'er was past away
The childish time, some happier play
My womanhood would cheer.

I knew the time would pass away ;
And yet, beside the rose-tree wall,
Dear God, how seldom, if at all,
Did I look up to pray !

The time is past :—and now that
grows

The cypress high among the trees,
And I behold white sepulchres
As well as the white rose,—

When wiser, meeker thoughts are
given,

And I have learnt to lift my face,
Reminded how earth's greenest place
The colour draws from heaven,—

It something saith for earthly pain,
But more for heavenly promise free,
That I who was, would shrink to be
That happy child again.

THE SOUL'S TRAVELLING

Ὡς τοι
Παραπλάνητος.

—SYNESTIUS

I

I DWELL amid the city ever.
The great humanity which beats
Its life along the stony streets,
Like a strong and unsunned river
In a self-made course,
I sit and hearken while it rolls.
Very sad and very hoarse
Certes is the flow of souls :
Infinite tendencies,
By the finite, prest and pent,—
In the finite, turbulent.

And how we tremble in surprise,
When sometimes, with an awful
sound,
God's great plummet strikes the
ground !

II

The champ of the steeds on the silver
bit,
As they whirl the rich man's carriage
by ;
The beggar's whine as he looks at it,—
But it goes too fast for charity.
The trail on the street of the poor
man's broom,
That the lady who walks to her
palace-home,
On her silken skirt may catch no dust :
The tread of the business-men who
must
Count their per cents. by the paces
they take :
The cry of the babe unheard of its
mother
Though it lie on her breast, while she
thinks of the other
Laid yesterday where it will not wake.
The flower-girl's prayer to buy roses
and pinks
Held out in the smoke, like stars by
day ;
The gin-door's oath that hollowly
chinks
Guilt upon grief and wrong upon
hate,
The cabman's cry to get out of the
way,
The dustman's call down the area-
grate,
The young maid's jest, and the old
wife's scold,
The haggling talk of the boys at a
stall,
The fight in the street which is backed
for gold,—
The plea of the lawyers in Westmin-
ster Hall ;
The drop on the stones of the blind
man's staff,
As he trades in his own grief's sacred-
ness,
The brothel shriek, and the New-
gate laugh,
The hum upon 'Change, and the
organ's grinding,
The grinder's face being nevertheless

Dry and vacant of even woe
While the children's hearts are leap-
ing so
At the merry music's winding !
The black-plumed funeral's creeping
train

Long and slow (and yet they will go
As fast as Life though it hurry and
strain !)

Creeping the populous houses through
And nodding their plumes at either
side,

At many a house where an infant, new
To the sunshiny world, has just
struggled and cried ;

At many a house, where sitteth a bride
Trying the morrow's coronals
With a scarlet blush, to-day.—

Slowly creep the funerals,
As none should hear the noise and say,
The living, the living, must go away
To multiply the dead !

Hark ! an upward shout is sent !
In grave strong joy from tower to
steeple

The bells ring out—
The trumpets sound, the people shout,
The young Queen goes to her parlia-
ment.

She turneth round her large blue eyes,
More bright with childish memories
Than royal hopes, upon the people ;
On either side she bows her head

Lowly, with a Queenly grace,
And smile most trusting-innocent,
As if she smiled upon her mother !
The thousands press before each other
To bless her to her face :

And booms the deep majestic voice
Through trump and drum,—“ May
the Queen rejoice
In the people's liberties ! ”—

III

I dwell amid the city,
And hear the flow of souls in act
and speech,
For pomp or trade, for merrymake or
folly :

I hear the confluence and sum of each,
And that is melancholy !—
Thy voice is a complaint, O crownèd
city,

The blue sky covering thee, like God's
great pity.

IV

O blue sky ! it mindeth me
Of places where I used to see
Its vast unbroken circle thrown
From the far pale-peaked hill
Out to the last verge of ocean—
As by God's arm it were done
Then for the first time, with the
emotion

Of that first impulse on it still.
Oh, we spirits fly at will,
Faster than the winged steed
Whereof in old book we read,
With the sunlight foaming back
From his flanks, to a misty wrack,
And his nostril reddening proud
As he breasteth the steep thunder-
cloud !

Smother than Sabrina's chair
Gliding up from wave to air,
While she smileth debonair
Yet holy, coldly and yet brightly,
Like her own mooned waters nightly,
Through her dripping hair.

V

Very fast and smooth we fly,
Spirits, though the flesh be by.
All looks feed not from the eye,
Nor all hearings from the ear ;
We can hearken and espy
Without either ; we can journey,
Bold and gay, as knight to tourney ;
And though we wear no visor down
To dark our countenance, the foe
Shall never chafe us as we go.

VI

I am gone from peopled town !
It passeth its street-thunder round
My body which yet hears no sound.
For now another sound, another
Vision my soul's senses have—
O'er a hundred valleys deep,
Where the hills' green shadows sleep
Scarce known because the valley-trees
Cross those upland images—
O'er a hundred hills, each other
Watching to the western wave—
I have travelled,—I have found
The silent, lone, remembered ground.

VII

I have found a grassy niche,
Hollowed in a seaside hill,
As if the ocean-grandeur, which
Is aspectable from the place,

Had struck the hill as with a mace
Sudden and cleaving. You might fill
That little nook with the little cloud
Which sometimes lieth by the moon
To beautify a night of June ;
A cavelike nook, which, opening all
To the wide sea, is disallowed
From its own earth's sweet pastoral ;
Cavelike, but roofless overhead,
And made of verdant banks instead
Of any rocks, with flowerets spread,
Instead of spar and stalactite . . .
Cowslips and daisies, gold and
white, . . .
Such pretty flowers on such green
sward.

You think the sea they look toward
Doth serve them for another sky
As warm and blue as that on high.

VIII

And in this hollow is a seat,
And when you shall have crept to it,
Slipping down the banks too steep
To be o'erbrowsed by the sheep,
Do not think—though at your feet
The cliffs' disrupt—you shall behold
The line where earth and ocean meet ;
You sit too much above to view
The solemn confluence of the two :
You can hear them as they greet ;
You can hear that evermore
Distance-softened noise, more old
Than Nereid's singing,—the tide
spent

Joining soft issues with the shore
In harmony of discontent,—
And when you hearken to the grave
Lamenting of the underwave,
You must believe in earth's common union,
Albeit you witness not the union.

IX

Except that sound, the place is full
Of silences, which, when you cull
By any word, it thrills you so
That presently you let them grow
To meditation's fullest length
Across your soul with a soul's
strength :

And as they touch your soul, they
borrow
As of its grandeur, so its sorrow,—
That deathly odour which the clay
Leaves on its deathlessness away.

X

Always! always! and must this be?
 Rapid Soul from city gone,
 Dost thou carry inwardly
 What doth make the city's moan?
 Must this deep sigh of thine own
 Haunt thee with humanity?
 Green-visioned banks that are too
 steep

To be o'erbrowsed by the sheep,
 May all sad thoughts adown you creep
 Without a shepherd?—Mighty sea,
 Can we dwarf thy magnitude,
 And fit it to our straitest mood?—
 O fair, fair Nature! are we thus
 Impotent and querulous
 Among thy workings glorious,
 Wealth and sanctities,—that still
 Leave us vacant and defiled,
 And wailing like a kissed child,
 Kissed soft against his will?

XI

God, God!—

With a child's voice I cry,
 Weak, sad, confidingly—

God, God!

Thou knowest eyelids raised not
 always up
 Unto Thy love (as none of ours are),
 droop,

As ours, o'er many a tear!
 Thou knowest, though Thy universe
 is broad,
 Two little tears suffice to cover all.
 Thou knowest,—Thou, Who art so
 prodigal
 Of beauty,—we are oft but stricken
 deer,
 Expiring in the woods—that care
 for none
 Of those delightful flowers they
 die upon.

XII

O blissful Mouth, which breathed
 the mournful breath
 We name our souls,—self spoilt!—
 by that strong passion
 Which paled Thee once with sighs,—
 by that strong death
 Which made Thee once unbreathing—
 from the wrack,
 Themselves have called around them,
 call them back—
 Back to Thee in continuous aspiration!
 For here, O Lord,

For here they travel vainly,—vainly
 pass
 From city pavement to untrodden
 sward,
 Where the lark finds her deep nest in
 the grass
 Cold with the earth's last dew. Yea,
 very vain
 The greatest speed of all these souls
 of men,
 Unless they travel upward to Thy
 Throne!
 There, sittest Thou, the satisfying
 ONE,
 With help for sins and holy perfect-
 ings
 For all requirements—while the arch-
 angel, raising
 Unto Thy face his full ecstatic gazing,
 Forgets the rush and rapture of his
 wings!

SOUNDS

Ἠκούσας ἢ οὐκ ἠκούσας; ———
 ÆSCHYLUS.

I

HEARKEN, hearken!
 The rapid river carrieth
 Many noises underneath
 The hoary ocean;
 Teaching his solemnity,
 Sounds of inland life and glee,
 Learnt beside the waving tree
 When the winds in summer prank
 Toss the shades from bank to bank,
 And the quick rains, in emotion
 Which rather glads than grieves,
 Count and visibly rehearse
 The pulses of the universe
 Upon the summer leaves—
 Learnt among the lilies straight,
 When they bow them to the weight
 Of many bees, whose hidden hum
 Seemeth from themselves to come—
 Learnt among the grasses green,
 Where the rustling mice are seen,
 By the gleaming, as they run,
 Of their quick eyes in the sun,
 And lazy sheep are browsing through,
 With their noses trailed in dew;
 And the squirrel leaps adown,
 Holding fast the filbert brown;
 And the lark, with more of mirth
 In his song than suits the earth,
 Droppeth some in soaring high,
 To pour the rest out in the sky:

While the woodland doves, apart
 In the copse's leafy heart,
 Solitary not ascetic,
 Hidden and yet vocal, seem
 Joining, in a lovely psalm,
 Man's despondence, nature's calm,
 Half mystical and half pathetic,
 Like a sighing in a dream.¹
 All these sounds the river telleth,
 Softened to an undertone
 Which ever and anon he swelleth
 By a burden of his own,
 In the ocean's ear.

Av! and ocean seems to hear
 With an inward gentle scorn,
 Smiling to his caverns worn.

II

Hearken, hearken!
 The child is shouting at his play
 Just in the tramping funeral's way;
 The widow moans as she turns aside
 To shun the face of the blushing
 bride,

While, shaking the tower of the
 ancient church,

The marriage bells do swing;
 And in the shadow of the porch
 An idiot sits, with his lean hands full
 Of hedgerow flowers and a poet's
 skull,

Laughing loud and gibbering,
 Because it is so brown a thing,
 While he sticketh the gaudy poppies
 red

In and out the senseless head
 Where all sweet fancies grew instead.
 And you may hear, at the self-same
 time,

Another poet who reads his rhyme,
 Low as a brook in the summer air,—
 Save when he droppeth his voice
 adown,

To dream of the amaranthine crown

¹ "While floating up bright forms ideal
 Mistress, or friend, around me stream;
 Half sense-supplied, and half unreal,
 Like music mingling with a dream."

John Kenyon.

I do not doubt that the "music" of the two
 concluding lines mingled, though very uncon-
 sciously, with my own "dream," and gave their
 form and pressure to the above distich. The
 ideas, however, being sufficiently distinct, I am
 satisfied with sending this note to the press after
 my verses, and with acknowledging another
 obligation to the valued friend to whom I
 already owe so many.

His mortal brows shall wear;
 And a baby cries with a feeble sound
 'Neath the weary weight of the life
 new-found;
 And an old man groans—with his
 testament
 Only half-signed—for the life that's
 spent;
 And lovers twain do softly say,
 As they sit on a grave, "For aye,
 for aye!"
 And foemen twain, while Earth,
 their mother,
 Looks greenly upward, curse each
 other.

A schoolboy drones his task, with
 looks

Cast over the page to the elm-tree
 rooks:

A lonely student cries aloud,
 "Eureka!" claspings at his shroud;
 A beldame's age-cracked voice doth
 sing

To a little infant slumbering;
 A maid forgotten weeps alone,
 Muffling her sobs on the trysting
 stone;

A sick man wakes at his own mouth's
 wail;

A gossip coughs in her thrice told tale;
 A muttering gamester shakes the dice;
 A reaper foretells good luck from the
 skies;

A monarch vows as he lifts his hand
 to them;

A patriot leaving his native land to
 them,

Cries to the world against perjured
 state;

A priest disserts upon linen skirts;
 A sinner screams for one hope more;

A dancer's feet do palpitate
 A piper's music out on the floor;

And nigh to the awful Dead, the living
 Low speech and stealthy steps are
 giving,

Because he cannot hear;
 And he who on that narrow bier
 Has room enough, is closely wound
 In silence piercing more than sound.

III

Hearken, hearken!
 God speaketh to thy soul;
 Using the supreme voice which doth
 confound

All life with consciousness of Deity,
 All senses into one,—
 As the seer-saint of Patmos, loving
 John,
 For whom did backward roll
 The cloud-gate of the future, turned
 to see
 The Voice which spake. It speaketh
 now—
 Through the regular breath of the
 calm creation,
 Through the moan of the creature's
 desolation,
 Striking, and in its stroke, resembling
 The memory of a solemn vow,
 Which pierceth the din of a festival
 Toonein the midst,—and he letteth fall
 The cup, with a sudden trembling.

IV

Hearken, hearken!
 God speaketh in thy soul;
 Saying, "O thou, that movest
 With feeble steps across this earth
 of Mine,
 To break beside the fount thy golden
 bowl
 And spill its purple wine,—
 Look up to heaven and see how like
 a scroll,
 My right hand hath thine immortality
 In an eternal grasping! Thou, that
 lovest
 The songful birds and grasses under-
 foot,
 And also what change mars and
 tombs pollute—
 I am the end of love!—give love to
 Me!
 O thou that sinnest, grace doth more
 abound
 Than all thy sin! sit still beneath
 My rood,
 And count the droppings of My
 victim-blood,
 And seek none other sound!"

V

Hearken, hearken!
 Shall we hear the lapsing river
 And our brother's sighing, ever,
 And not the voice of God?

NIGHT AND THE MERRY MAN

NIGHT

'NEATH my moon what doest thou
 With a somewhat paler brow

Than she giveth to the ocean?
 He, without a pulse or motion,
 Muttering low before her stands.
 Lifting his invoking hands,
 Like a seer before a sprite,
 To catch her oracles of light.
 But thy soul out-trembles now
 Many pulses on thy brow!
 Where be all thy laughers clear,
 Others laughed, alone to hear?
 Where, thy quaint jests, said for fame?
 Where, thy dances, turned to game?
 Where, thy festive companies,
 Mooned o'er with ladies' eyes,
 All more bright for thee, I trow?
 'Neath my moon, what doest thou?

THE MERRY MAN

I am digging my warm heart,
 Till I find its coldest part:
 I am digging wide and low,
 Further than a spade will go,
 Till that, when the pit is deep
 And large enough, I there may heap
 All my present pain and past
 Joy, dead things that look aghast
 By the daylight.—Now 'tis done!
 Throw them in, by one and one!
 I must laugh, at rising sun.

Memories—of fancy's golden
 Treasures which my hands have
 holden,
 Till the chillness made them ache;
 Of childhood's hopes, that used to
 wake

If birds were in a singing strain,
 And for less cause, sleep again;
 Of the moss seat in the wood
 Where I trysted solitude;
 Of the hill-top, where the wind
 Used to follow me behind,
 Then in sudden rush to blind
 Both my glad eyes with my hair,
 Taken gladly in the snare!

Of the climbing up the rocks,—
 Of the playing 'neath the oaks,
 Which retain beneath them now
 Only shadow of the bough:
 Of the lying on the grass
 While the clouds did overpass,—
 Only they, so lightly driven,
 Seeming betwixt me and Heaven:
 Of the little prayers serene.
 Murmuring of earth and sin:

Of large-leaved philosophy,
 Leaning from my childish knee;
 Of poetic book sublime,
 Soul-kissed for the first dear time,—
 Greek or English,—ere I knew
 Life was not a poem too!
 Throw them in, by one and one!
 I must laugh, at rising sun.

Of the glorious ambitions,
 Yet unquenched by their fruitions;
 Of the reading out the nights;
 Of the straining at mad heights;
 Of achievements, less desried
 By a dear few, than magnified;
 Of praises, from the many earned,
 When praise from love was undis-
 cerned;

Of the sweet reflecting gladness,
 Softened by itself to sadness.—
 Throw them in, by one and one!
 I must laugh, at rising sun.

What are these? more, more than
 these!

Throw in, dearer memories!—
 Of voices—whereof but to speak,
 Makes mine own all sunk and weak;
 Of smiles, the thought of which is
 sweeping

All my soul to floods of weeping;
 Of looks, whose absence fain would
 weigh

My looks to the ground for aye;
 Of clasping hands—ah me! I wring
 Mine, and in a tremble fling
 Downward, downward, all this pain-
 ing!

Partings, with the sting remaining;
 Meetings, with a deeper throe,
 Since the joy is ruined so;
 Changes, with a fiery burning—
 (Shadows upon all the turning.)
 Thoughts of—with a storm they
 came—

Them, I have not breath to name!
 Downward, downward, be they cast
 In the pit! and now at last
 My work beneath the moon is done,
 And I shall laugh, at rising sun.

But let me pause or ere I cover
 All my treasures darkly over.
 I will speak not in thine ears,
 Only tell my beaded tears
 Silently, most silently!
 When the last is calmly told,

Let that same moist rosary
 With the rest sepulchred be.
 Finished now. The darksome mould
 Sealeth up the darksome pit.
 I will lay no stone on it:
 Grasses I will sow instead,
 Fit for Queen Titania's tread;
 Flowers, encoloured with the sun,
 And *at at* written upon none.
 Thus, whenever saileth by
 The Lady World of dainty eye,
 Not a grief shall here remain,
 Silken shoon to damp or stain:
 And while she lisps, "I have not seen
 Any place more smooth and
 clean" . . .
 Here she cometh!—Ha, ha!—who
 Laughs as loud as I can do?

EARTH AND HER PRAISERS

I

THE Earth is old;
 Six thousand winters make her heart
 a-cold,
 The sceptre slanteth from her palsied
 hold.
 She saith, "Las me!—God's word
 that I was 'good'
 Is taken back to heaven,
 From whence when any sound comes,
 I am riven
 By some sharp bolt. And now no
 angel would
 Descend with sweet dew-silence on
 my mountains,
 To glorify the lovely river-fountains
 That gush along their side.
 I see, O weary change! I see instead
 This human wrath and pride,
 These thrones, and tombs, judicial
 wrong, and blood:
 And bitter words are poured upon
 mine head—
 'O Earth! thou art a stage for
 tricks unholy,
 A church for most remorseful melan-
 choly!
 Thou art so spoilt, we should forget
 we had
 An Eden in thee,—wert thou not so
 sad.
 Sweet children, I am old! ye, every
 one,
 Do keep me from a portion of my sun:

Give praise in change for brightness !
 That I may shake my hills in infiniteness
 Of breezy laughter, as in youthful mirth,
 To hear Earth's sons and daughters
 praising Earth."

II

Whereupon a child began,
 With spirit running up to man,
 As by angel's shining ladder,
 (May he find no cloud above !)
 Seeming he had ne'er been sadder
 All his days than now—
 Sitting in the chestnut grove,
 With that joyous overflow
 Of smiling from his mouth, o'er brow
 And cheek and chin, as if the breeze
 Leaning tricky from the trees
 To part his golden hairs, had blown
 Into an hundred smiles that one.

III

"O rare, rare Earth!" he saith,
 "I will praise thee presently;
 Not to-day; I have no breath!
 I have hunted squirrels three—
 Two ran down in the furzy hollow,
 Where I could not see nor follow;
 One sits at the top of the filbert tree,
 With a yellow nut, and a mock at me.
 Presently it shall be done,
 When I see which way those two have
 run;
 When the mocking one at the filbert-
 top
 Shall leap a-down, and beside me stop;
 Then, rare Earth, rare Earth,
 Will I pause, having known thy worth,
 To say all good of thee!"

IV

Next a lover, with a dream
 Neath his waking eyelids hidden,
 And a frequent sigh unbidden,
 And an idlesse all the day
 Beside a wandering stream,
 And a silence that is made
 Of a word he dares not say,—
 Shakes slow his pensive head.
 "Earth, Earth!" saith he,
 "If spirits, like thy roses, grew
 On one stalk, and winds austere
 Could but only blow them near,
 To share each other's dew;

If, when summer rains agree
 To beautify thy hills, I knew
 Looking off them I might see
 Some one very beauteous too,—
 Then, Earth," saith he,
 "I would praise . . . nay, nay—
 not thee!"

V

Will the pedant name her next?
 Crabbed with a crabbed text,
 Sits he in his study nook,
 With his elbow on a book,
 And with stately crossed knees,
 And a wrinkle deeply thrid
 Through his lowering brow,
 Caused by making proofs enow,
 That Plato in "Parmenides"
 Meant the same Spinoza did;
 Or, that an hundred of the groping
 Like himself, had made one Homer,—
Homer being a misnomer,
 What hath *he* to do with praise
 Of Earth, or ought? whene'er the
 sloping
 Sunbeams through his window daze
 His eyes off from the learned phrase,
 Straightway he draws close the cur-
 tain.
 May abstraction keep him dumb!
 Were his lips to ope, 'tis certain
 "Derivatum est" would come.

VI

Then a mourner moveth pale
 In a silence full of wail,
 Raising not his sunken head,
 Because he wandered last that way
 With that one beneath the clay:
 Weeping not, because that one,
 The only one who would have said,
 "Cease to weep, beloved!" has gone
 Whence returneth comfort none.
 The silence breaketh suddenly,—
 "Earth, I praise thee!" crieth he:
 "Thou hast a grave for also *me*."

VII

Ha, a poet! I know him by
 The ecstasy-dilated eye,
 Not uncharged with tears that ran
 Upward from his heart of man;
 By the cheek, from hour to hour,
 Kindled bright, or sunken wan,
 With a sense of lonely power;
 By the brow, uplifted higher

Than others, for more low declining ;
By the lip which words of fire
Overflowing have burned white,
While they gave the nations light !
Ay, in every time and place
Ye may know the poet's face
By the shade, or shining.

VIII

'Neath a golden cloud he stands,
Spreading his impassioned hands.
"O God's Earth!" he saith, "the
sign

From the Father-soul to mine
Of all beauteous mysteries,
Of all perfect images,
Which, divine in His divine,
In my human only are
Very excellent and fair !—
Think not, Earth, that I would raise
Weary forehead in thy praise,
(Weary, that I cannot go
Farther from thy region low.)
If were struck no richer meanings
From thee than thyself. The leanings
Of the close trees o'er the brim
Of a sunshine-haunted stream,
Have a sound beneath their leaves,

Not of wind, not of wind,
Which the poet's voice achieves.
The faint mountains heaped behind,
Have a falling on their tops,
Not of dew, not of dew,
Which the poet's fancy drops.
Viewless things his eyes can view ;
Driftings of his dream do light
All the skies by day and night ;
And the seas that deepest roll,
Carry murmurs of his soul.
Earth, I praise thee ! praise thou me !
God perfecteth His creation
With this recipient poet-passion,
And makes the beautiful to be.
I praise thee, O beloved sign,
From the God-soul unto mine !
Praise me, that I cast on thee
The cunning sweet interpretation,
The help and glory and dilation
Of mine immortality !"

IX

There was silence. None did dare
To use again the spoken air
Of that far-charming voice, until
A Christian resting on the hill,
With a thoughtful smile subdued
(Seeming learnt in solitude)

Which a weeper might have viewed
Without new tears, did softly say,
And looked up unto heaven alway
While he praised the Earth—

"O Earth,

I count the praises thou art worth,
By thy waves that move aloud,
By thy hills against the cloud,
By thy valleys warm and green,
By the copses' elms between ;
By their birds which, like a sprite
Scattered, through a strong delight,
Into fragments musical,
Stir and sing in every bush ;
By thy silver founts that fall,
As if to entice the stars at night
To thine heart ; by grass and rush,
And little weeds the children pull,
Mistook for flowers !

—Oh, beautiful

Art thou, Earth, albeit worse
Than in Heaven is called good !
Good to us, that we may know
Meekly from thy good to go ;
While the holy, crying Blood
Puts its music kind and low,
'Twixt such ears as are not dull,
And thine ancient curse !

X

"Praised be the mosses soft
In thy forest pathways oft,
And the thorns, which make us think
Of the thornless river-brink,

Where the ransomed tread !
Praised be thy sunny gleams,
And the storm, that worketh dreams
Of calm unfinished !

Praised be thine active days,
And thy night-time's solemn need,
When in God's dear book we read,
'No night shall be therein.'

Praised be thy dwellings warm,
By household faggot's cheerful blaze,
Where, to hear of pardoned sin,
Pauseth oft the merry din,
Save the babe's upon the arm,
Who croweth to the crackling wood.
Yea,—and better understood,
Praised be thy dwellings cold,
Hid beneath the churchyard mould,
Where the bodies of the saints,
Separate from earthly taints,
Lie asleep, in blessing bound,
Waiting for the trumpet's sound

To free them into blessing ;—none
Weeping more beneath the sun,
Though dangerous words of human
love
Be graven very near, above.

XI

"Earth, we Christians praise thee
thus,
Even for the change that comes,
With a grief, from thee to us !
For thy cradles and thy tombs ;
For the pleasant corn and wine,
And summer-heat ; and also for
The frost upon the sycamore,
And hail upon the vine !"

THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE
CHILD JESUS

"But see the Virgin blest
Hath laid her babe to rest."
—MILTON'S *Hymn on the Nativity*.

I

SLEEP, sleep, mine Holy One !
My flesh, my Lord !—what name ?
I do not know
A name that seemeth not too high or
low,
Too far from me or Heaven.
My Jesus, *that* is best ! that word
being given
By the majestic angel whose com-
mand
Was softly as a man's beseeching said,
When I and all the earth appeared to
stand
In the great overflow
Of light celestial from his wings and
head.
Sleep, sleep, my saving One !

II

And art Thou come for saving, baby-
browed
And speechless Being—art Thou come
for saving ?
The palm that grows beside our door
is bowed
By treadings of the low wind from
the south,
A restless shadow through the cham-
ber waving :
Upon its bough a bird sings in the sun ;
But Thou, with that close slumber on
Thy mouth,

Dost seem of wind and sun already
weary.
Art come for saving, O my weary
One ?

III

Perchance this sleep that shutteth
out the dreary
Earth-sounds and motions, opens on
Thy soul
High dreams on fire with God ;
High songs that make the pathways
where they roll
More bright than stars do theirs ;
and visions new
Of Thine eternal Nature's old abode.
Suffer this mother's kiss,
Best thing that earthly is,
To glide the music and the glory
through,
Nor narrow in Thy dream the broad
upliftings
Of any seraph wing !
Thus, noiseless, thus. Sleep, sleep,
my dreaming One !

IV

The slumber of His lips meseems to run
Through *my* lips to mine heart ; to
all its shiftings
Of sensual life, bringing contrarious-
ness
In a great calm. I feel, I could lie
down
As Moses did, and die,¹—and then
live most.
I am 'ware of you, heavenly Presences,
That stand with your peculiar light
unlost,—
Each forehead with a high thought
for a crown,
Unsunned i' the sunshine ! I am
'ware. Ye throw
No shade against the wall ! How
motionless
Ye round me with your living statuary,
While through your whiteness, in and
outwardly,
Continual thoughts of God appear to
go,
Like light's soul in itself ! I bear, I
bear,
To look upon the dropt lids of your
eyes,

¹ It is a Jewish tradition that Moses died of the kisses of God's lips.

Though their external shining testifies
To that beatitude within which were
Enough to blast an eagle at his sun.
I fall not on my sad clay face before
ye,—

I look on His; I know
My spirit which dilateth with the woe
Of His mortality,
May well contain your glory.
Yea, drop your lids more low,—
Ye are but fellow-worshippers with
me!

Sleep, sleep, my worshipped One!

V

We sate among the stalls at Bethle-
hem.

The dumb kine from their fodder
turning them,

Softened their horned faces
To almost human gazes
Toward the newly Born.

The simple shepherds from the star-
lit brooks

Brought visionary looks,

As yet in their astounded hearing rung
The strange, sweet angel-tongue.

The Magi of the East, in sandals worn,
Knelt reverent, sweeping round,
With long pale beards, their gifts
upon the ground,—

The incense, myrrh and gold

These baby hands were impotent to
hold.

So, let all earthlies and celestials wait
Upon Thy royal state!

Sleep, sleep, my kingly One!

VI

I am not proud,—meek angels, ye
invest

New meeknesses to hear such utter-
ance rest

On mortal lips,—“I am not proud”
—*not proud!*

Albeit in my flesh God sent His Son,
Albeit over Him my head is bowed,
As others bow before Him, still mine
heart

Bows lower than their knees. O
centuries

That roll, in vision, your futurities
My future grave athwart,—

Whose murmurs seem to reach me
while I keep

Watch o'er this sleep,—

Say of me as the Heavenly said—
“Thou art

The blesseddest of women!”—blessed-
est,

Not holiest, not noblest—no high
name,

Whose height misplaced may pierce
me like a shame,

When I sit meek in Heaven!

VII

For me—for me—

God knows that I am feeble like the
rest!—

I often wandered forth, more child
than maiden,

Among the midnight hills of Galilee,
Whose summits looked heaven-
laden,

Listening to silence, as it seemed to be
God's voice, so soft yet strong—so
fain to press

Upon my heart as Heaven did on the
height

And waken up its shadows by a light,
And show its vileness by a holiness.

Then I knelt down as silent as the
night,

Too self-renounced for fears.

Raising my small face to the boundless
blue

Whose stars did mix and tremble in
my tears.

God heard *them* falling after—with
His dew.

VIII

So, seeing my corruption, can I see
This Incorruptible now born of me—

This fair new Innocence no sun did
chance

To shine on (for even Adam was no
child),

Created from my nature all defiled,—
This mystery, from out mine ignor-
ance,—

Nor feel the blindness, stain, corrup-
tion, more

Than others do, or I did heretofore?—
Can hands wherein such burden
pure has been,

Not open with the cry, “Unclean,
unclean!”

More oft than any else beneath the
skies?

Ah King, ah Christ, ah son!

The kine, the shepherds, the abased
wise,
Did all less lowly wait
Than I, upon Thy state!—
Sleep, sleep, my kingly One!

IX

Art Thou a King, then? Come, His
universe,
Come, crown me Him a King!
Pluck rays from all such stars as
never ~~ring~~
Their light where fell a curse,
And make a crowning for this kingly
brow!—
What is my word?—Each empyreal
star
Sits in a sphere afar
In shining ambuscade:
The child-brow, crowned by
none,
Keeps its unchildlike shade.
Sleep, sleep, my crownless One!

X

Unchildlike shade!—no other babe
doth wear
An aspect very sorrowful, as Thou.—
No small-babe smiles, my watching
heart has seen,
To float like speech the speechless lips
between;
No dovelike cooing in the golden air,
No quick short joys of leaping baby-
hood.
Alas! our earthly good
In heaven thought evil, seems too
good for Thee:
Yet sleep, my weary One!

XI

And then the drear sharp tongue of
prophecy,
With the dread sense of things which
shall be done,
Doth smite me inly, like a sword—
a sword?
(That "smites the Shepherd")—then,
I think aloud
The words "despised,"—"rejected,"
—every word
Recoiling into darkness as I view
The DARLING on my knee.
Bright angels,—move not!—lest ye
stir the cloud
Betwixt my soul and His futurity!

I must not die, with mother's work
to do,
And could not live—and see.

XII

It is enough to bear
This image still and fair—
This holier in sleep,
Than a saint at prayer:
This aspect of a child
Who never sinned or smiled—
This Presence in an infant's
face:
This sadness most like love,
This love than love more deep,
This weakness like omnipotence
It is so strong to move!
Awful is this watching place,
Awful what I see from hence—
A king, without regalia,
A God, without the thunder,
A child, without the heart for
play;
Ay, a Creator rent asunder
From His first glory and cast
away
On His own world, for me alone
To hold in hands created, crying—
Son!

XIII

That tear fell not on THEE,
Beloved, yet Thou stirrest in Thy
slumber!
Thou, stirring not for glad sounds
out of number
Which through the vibratory palm
trees run
From summer wind and bird,
So quickly hast Thou heard
A tear fall silently?—
Wak'st Thou, O loving One?

TO BETTINE,

THE CHILD-FRIEND OF GOETHE

"I have the second sight, Goethe!"—*Letters
of a Child.*

I

BETTINE, friend of Goethe,
Hadst thou the second sight—
Upturning worship and delight
With such a loving duty
To his grand face, as women will
The childhood 'neath thine eyelids
still?

II

Before his shine to doom thee
Using the same child's smile
That heaven and earth, beheld ere-
while

For the first time, won from thee,
Ere star and flower grew dim and
dead,
Save at his feet and o'er his head.

III

Digging thine heart and throwing
Away its childhood's gold,
That so its woman-depth might hold
His spirit's overflowing.
For surging souls, no worlds can
bound,
Their channel in the heart have
found.

IV

O child, to change appointed,
Thou hadst not second sight!
What eyes the future view aright,
Unless by tears anointed?
Yea, only tears themselves can show
The burning ones that have to flow.

V

O woman, deeply loving,
Thou hadst not second sight!
The star is very high and bright,
And none can see it moving.
Love looks around, below, above,
Yet all his prophecy is—love.

VI

The bird thy childhood's playing
Sent onward o'er the sea,
Thy dove of hope, came back to thee
Without a leaf. Art laying
Its wet cold wing, no sun can dry,
Still in thy bosom, secretly?

VII

Our Goethe's friend, Bettine,
I have the second sight!
The stone upon his grave is white,
The funeral stone between ye;
And in thy mirror thou hast viewed
Some change as hardly understood.

VIII

Where's childhood? where is
Goethe?
The tears are in thine eyes.
Nay, thou shalt yet reorganise
Thy maidenhood of beauty

In his own glory, which is smooth
Of wrinkles, and sublime in youth.

IX

The poet's arms have wound thee,
He breathes upon thy brow,
He lifts thee upward in the glow
Of his great genius round thee,—
The childlike poet undefiled
Preserving evermore THE CHILD.

MAN AND NATURE

A SAD man on a summer day
Did look upon the earth and say—

"Purple cloud the hill-top binding,
Folded hills the valleys wind in,
Valleys, with fresh streams among
you,—

Streams, with bosky trees along you,—
Trees, with many birds and blossoms,—
Birds, with music-trembling bosoms,—
Blossoms, dropping dews that wreath
you,

To your fellow flowers beneath you,—
Flowers, that constellate on earth,—
Earth, that shakest to the mirth
Of the merry Titan ocean,
All his shining hair in motion!
Why am I thus the only one
Who can be dark beneath the sun?"

But when the summer day was past,
He looked to heaven, and smiled at
last,
Self-answered so—

"Because, O cloud,
Pressing with thy crumpled shroud
Heavily on mountain top,—
Hills that almost seem to drop,
Stricken with a misty death,
To the valleys underneath,—
Valleys, sighing with the torrent,—
Waters, streaked with branches hor-
rent,—
Branchless trees, that shake your head
Wildly o'er your blossoms spread
Where the common flowers are found,—
Flowers, with foreheads to the
ground,—

Ground, that shrieketh while the sea
With his iron smitheth thee—
I am, besides, the only one
Who can be bright *without* the sun."

A SEA-SIDE WALK

I

We walked beside the sea,
 After a day which perished silently
 Of its own glory—like the Princess
 weird
 Who, combating the Genius, scorched
 and seared,
 Uttered with burning breath, "Ho !
 victory !"
 And sank adown, an heap of ashes
 pale;
 So runs the Arab tale.

II

The sky above us showed
 A universal and unmoving cloud,
 On which the cliffs permitted us to
 see
 Only the outline of their majesty,
 As master-minds when gazed at by
 the crowd !
 And, shining with a gloom, the water
 grey
 Swang in its moon-taught way.

III

Nor moon nor stars were out.
 They did not dare to tread so soon
 about,
 Though trembling, in the footsteps of
 the sun.
 The light was neither night's nor
 day's, but one
 Which, life-like, had a beauty in its
 doubt ;
 And Silence's impassioned breathings
 round
 Seemed wandering into sound.

IV

O solemn-beating heart
 Of nature ! I have knowledge that
 thou art
 Bound unto man's by cords he cannot
 sever—
 And, what time they are slackened by
 him ever
 So to attest his own supernal part,
 Still runneth thy vibration fast and
 strong
 The slackened cord along.

V

For though we never spoke
 Of the grey water and the shaded
 rock,—

Dark wave and stone unconsciously
 were fused
 Into the plaintive speaking that we
 used,
 Of absent friends and memories
 unforsook,
 And, had we seen each other's face,
 we had
 Seen haply, each was sad.

THE SEA-MEW

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO M. E. H.

I

How joyously the young sea-mew
 Lay dreaming on the waters blue,
 Whereon our little bark had thrown
 A forward shade, the only one,
 (But shadows ever man pursue.)

II

Familiar with the waves and free,
 As if their own white foam were he,
 His heart, upon the heart of ocean,
 Lay learning all its mystic motion
 And throbbing to the throbbing sea.

III

And such a brightness in his eye,
 As if the ocean and the sky
 Within him had lit up and nurst
 A soul, God gave him not at first,
 To comprehend their majesty.

IV

We were not cruel, yet did sunder
 His white wing from the blue waves
 under,
 And bound it, while his fearless eyes
 Shone up to ours in calm surprise,
 As deeming us some ocean wonder !

V

We bore our ocean bird unto
 A grassy place, where he might view
 The flowers that curtsy to the bees,
 The waving of the tall green trees,
 The falling of the silver dew.

VI

But flowers of earth were pale to him
 Who had seen the rainbow fishes
 swim ;
 And when earth's dew around him lay,
 He thought of ocean's winged spray,
 And his eye waxed sad and dim.

VII

The green trees round him only made
A prison with their darksome shade :
And drooped his wing, and mourned
he

For his own boundless glittering sea—
Albeit he knew not they could fade.

VIII

Then One her gladsome face did bring,
Her gentle voice's murmuring,
In ocean's stead his heart to move,
And teach him what was human love—
He thought it a strange, mournful
thing.

IX

He lay down in his grief to die
(First looking to the sea-like sky,
That hath no waves!), because, alas!
Our human touch did on him pass,
And with our touch, our agony.

FELICIA HEMANS

TO L. E. L., REFERRING TO HER MONODY
ON THAT POETESS

I

Thou bay-crowned living One that
o'er the bay-crowned Dead art
bowing,
And, o'er the shadeless moveless brow
the vital shadow throwing,
And o'er the sighless songless lips
the wail and music wedding,
Dropping above the tranquil eyes,
the tears not of their shedding !—

II

Take music from the silent Dead,
whose meaning is completer ;
Reserve thy tears for living brows
where all such tears are meeter ;
And leave the violets in the grass to
brighten where thou treadest !
No flowers for her ! no need of flowers
—albeit "bring flowers," thou
saidest.

III

Yes, flowers, to crown the "cup and
lute !" since both may come to
breaking :
Or flowers, to greet the "bride !"
the heart's own beating works its
aching :

Or flowers, to soothe the "captive's"
sight, from earth's free bosom
gathered,
Reminding of his earthly hope, then
withering as it withered !

IV

But bring not near her solemn corse,
the type of human seeming !
Lay only dust's stern verity upon the
dust undreaming !
And while the calm perpetual stars
shall look upon it solely,
Her spherèd soul shall look on *them*,
with eyes more bright and holy.

V

Nor mourn, O living One, because her
part in life was mourning.
Would she have lost the poet's fire for
anguish of the burning ?—
The minstrel harp, for the strained
string ? the tripod, for the afflated
Woe ? or the vision, for those tears in
which it shone dilated ?

VI

Perhaps she shuddered while the
world's cold hand her brow was
wreathing,
But never wronged that mystic
breath which breathed in all her
breathing,
Which drew from rocky earth and
man, abstractions high and
moving—
Beauty, if not the beautiful, and love,
if not the loving.

VII

Such visionings have paled in sight :
the Saviour she descrieth,
And little recks *who* wreathed the brow
which on His bosom lieth.
The whiteness of His innocence o'er
all her garments, flowing,
There, learneth she the sweet "new
song," she will not mourn in
knowing.

VIII

Be happy, crowned and living One !
and, as thy dust decayeth,
May thine own England say for thee,
what now for Her it sayeth—
"Albeit softly in our ears her silver
song was ringing,

The footfall of her parting soul is
softer than her singing!"

MEMORY AND HOPE

I

BACK-LOOKING Memory
And prophet Hope both sprang from
out the ground;
One, where the flashing of Cherubic
sword
Fell sad, in Eden's ward,—
And one, from Eden earth, within the
sound
Of the four rivers lapsing pleasantly,
What time the promise after curse
was said—
"Thy seed shall bruise his head."

II

Poor Memory's brain is wild,
As moonstruck by that flaming
atmosphere
When she was born. Her deep eyes
shine and shone
With light that conquereth sun
And stars to wanner paleness year by
year:
With odorous gums, she mixeth
things defiled;
She trampleth down earth's grasses
green and sweet,
With her far-wandering feet.

III

She plucketh many flowers,
Their beauty on her bosom's coldness
killing;
She teacheth every melancholy sound
To winds and waters round;
She droppeth tears with seed where
man is tilling
The rugged soil in his exhausted
hours;
She smileth—ah me! in her smile
doth go
A mood of deeper woe!

IV

Hope tripped on out of sight,
Crowned with an Eden wreath she
saw not fade,
And went a-nodding through the
wilderness,
With brow that shone no less
Than sea-bird wings, by storm more
frequent made,—

B.P.

Searching the treeless rock for fruits of
light;
Her fair quick feet being armed from
stones and cold,
By slippers of pure gold.

V

Memory did Hope much wrong,
And, while she dreamed, her slippers
stole away;
But still she wended on with mirth
unheeding,
The while her feet were bleeding,
Till Memory met her on a certain day,
And with most evil eyes did search
her long
And cruelly, whereat she sank to
ground
In a stark deadly swoond.

VI

And so my Hope were slain,
Had it not been that Thou wert
standing near,
O Thou, who saidest "live" to
creatures lying
In their own blood, and dying!
For Thou her forehead to Thine heart
didst rear
And make its silent pulses sing again,—
Pouring a new light o'er her dark-
ened eyne,
With tender tears from Thine!

VII

Therefore my Hope arose
From out her swoond and gazed
upon Thy face,
And, meeting there that soft sub-
duing look
Which Peter's spirit shook,
Sank downward in a rapture to em-
brace
Thy pierced hands and feet with
kisses close,
And prayed Thee to assist her ever-
more
To "reach the things before."

VIII

Then gavest Thou the smile
Whence angel-wings thrill quick like
summer lightning,
Vouchsafing rest beside Thee, where
she never
From Love and Faith may
sever,—

K

Whereat the Eden crown she saw not
whitening,
A time ago, though whitening all the
while,
Reddened with life, to hear the Voice
which talked
To Adam as he walked.

THE SLEEP

"He giveth His beloved sleep."

PSALM CXXVII. 2.

I

Of all the thoughts of God that are
Borne inward unto souls afar,
Along the Psalmist's music deep,
Now tell me if that any is,
For gift or grace, surpassing this—
"He giveth His beloved, sleep?"

II

What would we give to our beloved?
The hero's heart, to be unmoved,
The poet's star-tuned harp, to sweep,
The patriot's voice, to teach and
rouse,
The monarch's crown, to light the
brows?—

"He giveth *His* beloved, sleep."

III

What do we give to our beloved?
A little faith, all undisproved,
A little dust, to overweep,
And bitter memories to make
The whole earth blasted for our
sake,

"He giveth *His* beloved, sleep."

IV

"Sleep soft, beloved!" we sometimes
say,

But have no tune to charm away
Sad dreams that through the eyelids
creep:

But never doleful dream again
Shall break the happy slumber when
"He giveth *His* beloved, sleep."

V

O earth, so full of dreary noises!
O men, with wailing in your voices!
O delved gold, the wailers heap!
O strife, O curse, that o'er it fall!
God strikes a silence through you all,
And "giveth His beloved, sleep."

VI

His dews drop mutely on the hill,
His cloud above it saileth still,

Though on its slope men sow and
reap.

More softly than the dew is shed,
Or cloud is floated overhead,
"He giveth His beloved, sleep."

VII

Yea, men may wonder while they scan
A living, thinking, feeling man,
Confirmed in such a rest to keep,
But angels say—and through the word
I think their happy smile is heard—
"He giveth His beloved, sleep."

VIII

For me, my heart that erst did go
Most like a tired child at a show,
That sees through tears the jugglers
leap,—

Would now its wearied vision close,
Would childlike on *His* love repose,
Who "giveth His beloved, sleep!"

IX

And, friends, dear friends,—when it
shall be

That this low breath is gone from me,
And round my bier ye come to weep,
Let one, most loving of you all,
Say, "Not a tear must o'er her fall—
He giveth His beloved, sleep."

MY DOVES

"O Weisheit! Du red'st wie eine Taube!"
GOETHE.

My little doves have left a nest
Upon an Indian tree,

Whose leaves fantastic take their
rest

Or motion from the sea:

For, ever there, the sea-winds go
With sunlit paces to and fro.

The tropic flowers looked up to it,
The tropic stars looked down,

And there my little doves did sit,
With feathers softly brown,
And glittering eyes that showed their
right

To general Nature's deep delight.
And God them taught, at every close

Of murmuring waves beyond,
And green leaves round, to interpose
Their choral voices fond,

Interpreting that love must be
The meaning of the earth and sea.

Fit ministers! Of living loves,
Theirs hath the calmest fashion;

Their living voice the likest moves
To lifeless intonation,—
The lovely monotone of springs
And winds and such insensate
things.

My little doves were ta'en away
From that glad nest of theirs,
Across an ocean rolling grey,
And tempest-clouded airs.
My little doves!—who lately knew
The sky and wave by warmth and
blue!

And now, within the city prison,
In mist and chillness pent,
With sudden upward look they listen
For sounds of past content—
For lapse of water, swell of breeze,
Or nut-fruit falling from the trees.

The stir without the glow of passion—
The triumph of the mart—
The gold and silver as they clash on
Man's cold metallic heart—
The roar of wheels, the cry for
bread,—

These only sounds are heard instead.

Yet still, as on my human hand
Their fearless heads they lean,
And almost seem to understand
What human musings mean—
(Their eyes, with such a plaintive
shine,

Are fastened upwardly to mine !)

Soft falls their chant, as on the nest
Beneath the sunny zone ;
For love that stirred it in their breast
Has not aweary grown,
And, 'neath the city's shade can keep
The well of music clear and deep.

And love that keeps the music, fills
With pastoral memories :
All echoes from out the hills,
All droppings from the skies,
All flowings from the wave and wind,
Remembered in their chant, I find.

So teach ye me the wisest part,
My little doves ! to move
Along the city-ways with heart
Assured by holy love,
And vocal with such songs as own
A fountain to the world unknown.

'Twas hard to sing by Babel's stream—
More hard, in Babel's street !

But if the soulless creatures deem
Their music not unmeet
For sunless walls—let us begin,
Who wear immortal wings within!

To me, fair memories belong
Of scenes that used to bless,
For no regret, but present song,
And lasting thankfulness,
And very soon to break away,
Like types, in purer things than they.

I will have hopes that cannot fade,
For flowers the valley yields :
I will have humble thoughts, instead
Of silent, dewy fields :
My spirit and my God shall be
My seaward hill, my boundless sea !

THE LITTLE FRIEND

WRITTEN IN THE BOOK WHICH SHE
MADE AND SENT TO ME

—το δ' ἡδὴ ἐξ οὐθαλμων ἀπελήλυθεν
MARCUS ANTONINUS.

THE book thou givest, dear as such,
Shall bear thy dearer name ;
And many a word the leaves shall
touch,

For thee who form'dst the same !
And on them, many a thought shall
grow
'Neath memory's rain and sun,
Of thee, glad child, who dost not
know

That thought and pain are one !

Yes ! thoughts of thee, who satest oft,
A while since, at my side—
So wild to tame,—to move so soft,
So very hard to chide :

The childish vision at thine heart,
The lesson on the knee ;
The wandering looks which *would*
depart,
Like gulls, across the sea !

The laughter, which no half-belief
In wrath could all suppress ;
The falling tears, which looked like
grief,

And were but gentleness :
The fancies sent, for bliss, abroad,
As Eden's were not done—
Mistaking still the cherub's sword
For shining of the sun !

The sportive speech with wisdomin't—
The question strange and bold—

The childish fingers in the print
Of God's creative hold :
The praying words in whispers said,
The sin with sobs confest ;
The leaning of the young meek head
Upon the Saviour's breast !

The gentle consciousness of praise,
With hues that went and came :
The brighter blush, a word could raise,
Were *that*—a father's name !
The shadow on thy smile for each
That on his face could fall !
So quick hath love been, *thee* to teach,
What soon it teacheth all.

Sit still as erst beside his feet !
The future days are dim,—
But those will seem to thee most
sweet

Which keep thee nearest *him* !
Sit at his feet in quiet mirth,
And let him see arise
A clearer sun and greener earth
Within thy loving eyes !—

Ah, loving eyes ! that used to lift
Your childhood to my face—
That leave a memory on the gift
I look on in your place—
May bright-eyed hosts your guar-
dians be

From all but thankful tears,—
While, brightly as ye turned on *me*,
Ye meet th' advancing years !

THE STUDENT

Τι οὖν τούτο πρὸς σε; καὶ οὐδὲν λέγω
ὅτι πρὸς τὸν τεθνηκότα, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸν
ζῶντα, τί ὁ ἐπαῖνος

MARCUS ANTONINUS.

" My midnight lamp is weary as my
soul,

And, being unimmortal, has gone out.
And now alone yon moony lamp of
heaven,

Which God lit and not man, illumi-
nates

These volumes, others wrote in wear-
iness

As I have read them ; and this cheek
and brow,

Whose paleness, burned in with heats
of thought,

Would make an angel smile to see
how ill

Clay thrust from Paradise consorts
with mind—
If angels could, like men, smile
bitterly.

" Yet, must my brow be paler ! I
have vowed

To clip it with the crown which can-
not fade,

When *it* is faded. Not in vain ye cry,
O glorious voices that survive the
tongues

From whence was drawn your sepa-
rate sovereignty—

For I would reign beside you ! I
would melt

The golden treasures of my health
and life

Into that name ! My lips are
vowed apart

From cheerful words ; mine ears,
from pleasant sounds ;

Mine eyes, from sights God made so
beautiful,—

My feet, from wanderings under
shady trees ;

Mine hands, from clasping of dear-
loving friends,—

My very heart, from feelings which
move soft !

Vowed am I from the day's delight-
someness,

And dreams of night ! and when the
house is dumb

In sleep, which is the pause 'twixt
life and life,

I live and waken thus ; and pluck
away

Slumber's sleek poppies from my
pained lids—

Goaded my mind with thongs
wrought by herself,

To toil and struggle along this
mountain-path

Which hath no mountain-airs ;
until she sweat

Like Adam's brow, and gasp, and
rend away

In agony, her garment of the flesh ! "

And so his midnight lamp was lit anew,
And burned till morning. But his
lamp of life

Till morning burned not ! He was
found embraced,

Close, cold, and stiff, by Death's com-
pelling sleep ;

His breast and brow supported on a
page
Charactered over with a praise of *fame*,
Of its divineness and beatitude—
Words which had often caused that
heart to throb,
That cheek to burn; though silent
lay they now,
Without a single beating in the pulse,
And all the fever gone!

I saw a bay
Spring verdant from a newly-fash-
ioned grave.
The grass upon the grave was ver-
danter,
That being watered by the eyes of
One
Who bore not to look up toward the
tree!
Others looked on it—some, with
passing glance,
Because the light wind stirred in its
leaves;
And some, with sudden lighting of
the soul
In admiration's ecstasy!—Ay! some
Did wag their heads like oracles, and
say,
" 'Tis very well!"—but none remem-
bered
The heart which housed the root,
except that ONE
Whose sight was lost in weeping!

Is it thus,
Ambition, idol of the intellect?
Shall we drink aconite, alone to use
Thy golden bowl? and sleep our-
selves to death—
To dream thy visions about life? O
Power

Thou art a very feebleness!—before
Thy clayey feet we bend our knees of
clay,
And round thy senseless brow bind
diadems

With paralytic hands, and shout
"A god!"

With voices mortal-hoarse! Who
can discern

Th' infirmities they share in? Being
blind,

We cannot see thy blindness: being
weak,

We cannot feel thy weakness: being
low,

We cannot mete thy baseness: being
unwise,
We cannot understand thy idiocy!

THE EXILE'S RETURN

I
WHEN from thee, weeping, I re-
moved,
And from my land for years,
I thought not to return, Beloved,
With those same parting tears.
I come again to hill and lea,
Weeping for thee.

II
I clasped thine hand when standing
last
Upon the shore in sight.
The land is green, the ship is fast,
I shall be there to-night!
I shall be there—no longer *we*—
No more with thee.

III
Had I beheld thee dead and still,
I might more clearly know,
How heart of thine could turn as
chill
As hearts by nature so;
How change could touch the false-
hood-free
And changeless *thee*!

IV
But now thy tender looks last-seen
Within my soul remain,
'Tis hard to think that *they* have
been, . . .
To be no more again—
That I shall vainly wait—ah me!
A word from thee.

V
I could not bear to look upon
That mound of funeral clay,
Where one sweet voice is silence,—one
Æthereal brow decay;
Where all thy mortal I might see,
But never thee,

VI
For thou art where all friends are gone,
Whose parting pain is o'er:
And I, who love and weep alone,
Where thou wilt weep no more,
Weep bitterly and selfishly,
For *me*, not *thee*.

VII

I know Beloved, thou canst not know
That I endure this pain !
For saints in Heaven, the Scriptures
show,
Can never grieve again—
And grief, once known for mine,
would be
Still shared by thee !

A SONG AGAINST SINGING

TO E. J. H.

I

THEY bid me sing to thee,
Thou golden-haired, and silver-
voiced child,
With lips by no worse sigh than
sleep's, defiled ;
With eyes unknowing how tears dim
the sight,
With feet all trembling at the new
delight
Treaders of earth to be !

II

Ah no ! the lark may bring
A song to thee from out the morning
cloud,
The merry river from its lilies bowed,
The brisk rain from the trees, the
lucky wind,
That half doth make its music, half
doth find,—
But I—I may not sing.

III

How could I think it right,
New-comer on our earth as, Sweet,
thou art,
To bring a verse from out an human
heart,
Made heavy with accumulated tears,
And cross with such amount of weary
years,
Thy day-sum of delight ?

IV

E'en if the verse were said,
Thou, who wouldst clap thy tiny
hands to hear
The wind or rain, gay bird or river
clear,
Wouldst, at that sound of sad humani-
ties,
Upturn thy bright uncomprehending
eyes
And bid me play instead.

V

Therefore no song of mine !
But prayer in place of singing ! prayer
that would
Commend thee to the new-creating
God,
Whose gift is childhood's heart
without its stain
Of weakness, ignorance, and chang-
ing vain—
That gift of God be thine !

VI

So wilt thou aye be young,
In lovelier childhood than thy shin-
ing brow
And pretty winning accents make
thee now !
Yea, sweeter than this scarce arti-
culate sound
(How sweet !) of " father," " mother,"
shall be found
The ABBA on thy tongue.

VII

And so, as years shall chase
Each other's shadows, thou wilt less
resemble
Thy fellows of the earth who toil and
tremble,
Than him thou seest not, thine angel
bold
Yet meek, whose ever-lifted eyes
behold
The Ever-loving's face.

STANZAS

I MAY sing ; but minstrel's singing
Ever ceaseth with his playing.
I may smile ; but time is bringing
Thoughts for smiles to wear away in.
I may view thee, mutely loving ;
But *shall* view thee so in dying !
I may sigh ; but life's removing,
And with breathing endeth sighing !
Be it so !

When no song of mine comes near
thee,
Will its memory fail to soften ?
When no smile of mine can cheer thee,
Will thy smile be used as often ?
When my looks the darkness bound-
eth,
Will thine own be lighted after ?
When my sigh no longer soundeth,
Wilt thou list another's laughter ?
Be it so !

THE YOUNG QUEEN

"This awful responsibility is imposed upon me so suddenly and at so early a period of my life, that I should feel myself utterly oppressed by the burden, were I not sustained by the hope that Divine Providence, Which has called me to this work, will give me strength for the performance of it."

The Queen's Declaration in Council.

THE shroud is yet unspread
To wrap our crownèd dead;
His soul hath scarcely hearkened for
the thrilling word of doom;
And Death that makes serene
Ev'n brows where crowns have
been,
Hath scarcely time to meeten his, for
silence of the tomb.

St. Paul's king-dirging note
The city's heart hath smote—
The city's heart is struck with thought
more solemn than the tone!
A shadow sweeps apace
Before the nation's face,
Confusing in a shapeless blot the
sepulchre and throne.

The palace sounds with wail—
The courtly dames are pale—
A widow o'er the purple bows, and
weeps its splendour dim:
And we who hold the boon,
A king for freedom won,
Do feel eternity rise up between our
thanks and him.

And while all things express
All glory's nothingness,
A royal maiden treadeth firm where
that departed trod!

The deathly scented crown
Weighs her shining ringlets
down;
But calm she lifts her trusting face,
and calleth upon God.

Her thoughts are deep within
her:
No outward pageants win her
From memories that in her soul are
rolling wave on wave—
Her palace walls enring
The dust that was a king—
And very cold beneath her feet, she
feels her father's grave.

And One, as fair as she,
Can scarce forgotten be,—

Who clasped a little infant dead, for
all a kingdom's worth!

The mournèd, blessèd One,
Who views Jehovah's throne,
Aye smiling to the angels, that she
lost a throne on earth.

Perhaps our youthful Queen
Remembers what has been—
Her childhood's rest by loving heart,
and sport on grassy sod—
Alas! can others wear
A mother's heart for her?
But calm she lifts her trusting face,
and calleth upon God.

Yea! call on God, thou maiden
Of spirit nobly laden,
And leave such happy days behind,
for happy-making years!
A nation looks to thee
For stedfast sympathy:
Make room within thy bright clear
eyes, for all its gathered tears.

And so the grateful isles
Shall give thee back their
smiles,
And as thy mother joys in thee, in
them shalt *thou* rejoice;
Rejoice to meekly bow
A somewhat paler brow,
While the King of Kings shall bless
thee by the British people's
voice!

VICTORIA'S TEARS

"Hark! the reiterated clangour sounds!
Now murmurs, like the sea or like the storm,
Or like the flames on forests, move and mount
From rank to rank, and loud and louder roll,
Till all the people is one vast applause!"

LANDOR'S Gebir.

"O MAIDEN! heir of kings!
A king has left his place!
The majesty of Death has swept
All other from his face!
And thou upon thy mother's breast
No longer lean adown,
But take the glory for the rest,
And rule the land that loves thee
best!"

She heard and wept—
She wept, to wear a crown!

They decked her courtly halls;
They reined her hundred steeds;
They shouted at her palace gate,
"A noble Queen succeeds!"

Her name has stirred the mountain's
sleep,

Her praise has filled the town !
And mourners God had stricken deep,
Looked hearkening up, and did not
weep.

Alone she wept,
Who wept, to wear a crown !

She saw no purples shine,
For tears had dimmed her eyes ;
She only knew her childhood's
flowers

Were happier pageantries !
And while her heralds played the part,
For million shouts to drown—
" God save the Queen " from hill to
mart,—

She heard through all her beating
heart,

And turned and wept—
She wept, to wear a crown !

God save thee, weeping Queen !
Thou shalt be well beloved !
The tyrant's sceptre cannot move,
As those pure tears have moved !
The nature in thine eyes we see,
That tyrants cannot own—
The love that guardeth liberties !
Strange blessing on the nation lies,
Whose Sovereign wept—
Yea ! wept, to wear its crown !

God bless thee, weeping Queen,
With blessing more divine !
And fill with happier love than earth's,
That tender heart of thine !
That when the thrones of earth
shall be

As low as graves brought down ;
A pierced hand may give to thee
The crown which angels shout to see !
Thou wilt not weep,
To wear that heavenly crown !

VANITIES

" From fading things, fond men, lift your desire,"
DRUMMOND.

COULD ye be very blest in hearkening
Youth's often danced-to melodies—
Hearing it piped, the midnight dar-
kening

Doth come to show the starry skies,—
To freshen garden flowers, the rain ?
It is in vain, it is in vain !

Could ye be very blest in urging
A captive nation's strength to thunder
Out into foam, and with its surging
The Xerxean fetters break asunder ?
The storm is cruel as the chain !
It is in vain, it is in vain !

Could ye be very blest in paling
Your brows with studious nights and
days,

When like your lamps your life is
failing,
And sighs, not breath, are wrought
from praise ?

Your tombs, not ye, that praise
retain—

It is in vain, it is in vain !

Yea ! but ye *could* be very blest,
If some ye nearest love were nearest !
Must *they* not love when loved best ?
Must *ye* not happiest love when
dearest ?

Alas !—how hard to feel again,
It is in vain, it is in vain !

For those ye love are not unsighing,—
They are unchanging least of all :
And ye the loved—ah ! no denying,
Will leave your lips beneath the pall,
When passioned ones have o'er it
sain—

" It is in vain, it is in vain ! "

BEREAVEMENT

WHEN some Beloveds, 'neath whose
eyelids lay

The sweet lights of my childhood,
one by one

Did leave me dark before the natural
sun,

And I astonished fell, and could not
pray,—

A thought within me to myself did say,
" Is God less God, that *thou* art left
undone ?

Rise, worship, bless Him ! in this
sackcloth spun

As in that purple ! "—But I answered
nay !

What child his filial heart in words can
loose,

If he behold his tender father raise
The hand that chastens sorely ? Can
he choose

But sob in silence with an upward
gaze ?—

And *my* great Father, thinking fit to
bruise,
Discerns in speechless tears, both
prayer and praise.

CONSOLATION

ALL are not taken! there are left
behind

Living Beloveds, tender looks to bring,
And make the daylight still a happy
thing,

And tender voices, to make soft the
wind.

But if it were not so—if I could find
No love in all the world for comfort-
ing,

Nor any path but hollowly did ring,
Where "dust to dust" the love from
life disjoined—

And if, before those sepulchres un-
moving,

I stood alone (as some forsaken lamb
Goes bleating up the moors in weary
dearth)

Crying, "Where are ye, O my loved
and loving?" . . .

I know a Voice would sound, "Daugh-
ter, I AM.

Can I suffice for HEAVEN, and not for
earth?"

TO MARY RUSSELL MITFORD

IN HER GARDEN

WHAT time I lay these rhymes anear
thy feet,

Benignant friend! I will not proudly
say

As better poets use, "These *flowers* I
lay,"

Because I would not wrong thy roses
sweet,

By spoiling so their name. And yet,
repeat

Thou, overleaning them this spring-
time day,

With heart as open to love as theirs
to May,—

"Low-rooted verse may reach some
heavenly heart,

Even like my blossoms, if as nature-
true,

Though not as precious." Thou art
unperplexed,

Dear friend, in whose dear writings
drops the dew

And blow the natural airs,—thou, who
art next

To nature's self in cheering the world's
view,—

To preach a sermon on so known a
text!

A SUPPLICATION FOR LOVE

HYMN I

"The Lord Jesus, although gone to the Father,
and we see Him no more, is still present with
His Church; and in His heavenly glory expends
upon her as intense a love, as in the agony of the
garden, and the crucifixion of the tree. Those
eyes that wept, still gaze upon her."—*Recalled
words of an extempore Discourse, preached at
Sidmouth, 1833.*

God, namèd Love, Whose fount Thou
art,

Thy crownless Church before Thee
stands,

With too much hating in her heart,
And too much striving in her hands!

O loving Lord! O slain for love!
Thy blood upon Thy garments
came—

Inwrap their folds our brows above,
Before we tell Thee all our shame!

"Love as I loved you," was the sound
That on Thy lips expiring sate!
Sweet words, in bitter strivings
drowned!

We hated as the worldly hate.

The spear that pierced for love Thy
side,

We dared for wrathful use to crave;
And with our cruel noise denied
Its silence to Thy blood-red grave!

Ah, blood! that speaketh more of
love

Than Abel's—could we speak like
Cain,

And grieve and scare that holy Dove,
The parting love-gift of the Slain?

Yet, Lord, Thy wrongèd love fulfil!
Thy Church, though fallen, before
Thee stands—

Behold, the voice is Jacob's still,
Albeit the hands are Esau's hands!

Hast thou no tears, like those be-
srent

Upon Thy Zion's ancient part?

No moving looks, like those which
sent

Their softness through a traitor's
heart?

No touching tale of anguish dear;
Whereby like children we may
creep,

All trembling, to each other near,
And view each other's face, and
weep?

Oh, move us—Thou hast power to
move—

One in the one Beloved to be!
Teach us the heights and depths of
love—

Give THINE—that we may love
like THEE!

THE MEDIATOR

HYMN II

"As the greatest of all sacrifices was required,
we may be assured that no other would have
sufficed."—*Boyd's Essay on the Atonement.*

How high Thou art! our songs can
own

No music Thou couldst stoop to
hear!

But still the Son's expiring groan
Is vocal in the Father's ear.

How pure Thou art! our hands are
died

With curses, red with murder's
hue—

But HE hath stretched His hands to
hide

The sins that pierced them from
Thy view.

How strong Thou art! we tremble lest
The thunders of Thine arm be
moved—

But HE is lying on Thy breast,
And Thou must clasp Thy best
Beloved!

How kind Thou art! Thou didst
not choose

To joy in Him for ever so;

But that embrace Thou wilt not loose
For vengeance, didst for love fore-
go!

High God, and pure, and strong, and
kind!

The low, the foul, the feeble, spare!

Thy brightness in His face we find
Behold our darkness only *there!*

THE WEeping SAVIOUR

HYMN III

— "tell
Whether His countenance can thee affright,
Tears in His eyes quench the amazing light."
DONNE.

WHEN Jesus' friend had ceased to be,
Still Jesus' heart its friendship
kept—

"Where have ye laid 'nim?"—
"Come and see!"

But ere His eyes could see, they
wept.

Lord! not in sepulchres alone,
Corruption's worm is rank and free;
The shroud of death our bosoms own—
The shades of sorrow! Come and
see!

Come, Lord! God's image cannot
shine

Where sin's funereal darkness
lowers—

Come! turn those weeping eyes of
Thine

Upon these sinning souls of ours!

And let those eyes, with shepherd care,
Their moving watch above us keep;
Till love the strength of sorrow wear,
And as Thou weepedst, *we* may
weep!

For surely we may weep to know,
So dark and deep our spirit's stain;
That had Thy blood refused to flow,
Thy very tears had flowed in vain.

THE MEASURE

HYMN IV

"He comprehended the dust of the earth in
a measure" (שֶׁלִיט).—ISAIAH xl. 12.

"Thou givest them tears to drink in great
measure" (שֶׁלִיט).—PSALM lxxx. 5.¹

I

God, the Creator, with a pulseless
hand

Of unoriginated power, hath weighed
The dust of earth and tears of man,
in one

¹ I believe that the word occurs in no other
part of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Measure and by one weight ;—
So saith His holy book.

II

Shall *we*, then, who have issued from
the dust
And there return,—shall *we*, who
toil for dust,
And wrap our winnings in this dusty
life,
Say, " No more tears, Lord God !
The measure runneth o'er " ?

III

Oh, holder of the balance, laughest
Thou ?
Nay, Lord ! be gentler to our fool-
ishness,
For His sake who assumed our dust,
and turns
On Thee pathetic eyes
Still moistened with our tears !

IV

And teach us, O our Father, while
we weep,
To look in patience upon earth and
learn—
Waiting, in that meek gesture, till at
last
Those tearful eyes be filled
With the dry dust of death.

COWPER'S GRAVE

I

It is a place where poets crowned may
feel the heart's decaying,—
It is a place where happy saints may
weep amid their praying :
Yet let the grief and humbleness, as
low as silence, languish !
Earth surely now may give her calm
to whom she gave her anguish.

II

O poets ! from a maniac's tongue, was
poured the deathless singing !
O Christians ! at your cross of hope,
a hopeless hand was clinging !
O men ! this man in brotherhood
your weary paths beguiling,
Groaned inly while he taught you
peace, and died while ye were
smiling !

III

And now, what time ye all may read
through dimming tears his story,

How discord on the music fell, and
darkness on the glory ;
And how, when, one by one, sweet
sounds and wandering lights
departed,
He wore no less a loving face because
so broken-hearted ;

IV

He shall be strong to sanctify the
poet's high vocation,
And bow the meekest Christian down
in meeker adoration ;
Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by
wise or good forsaken,
Named softly as the household name
of one whom God hath taken.

V

With quiet sadness and no gloom I
learn to think upon him,
With meekness that is gratefulness
to God Whose heaven hath won
him—
Who suffered once the madness-cloud,
to His own love to blind him,
But gently led the blind along where
breath and bird could find him,

VI

And wrought within his shattered
brain, such quick poetic senses,
As hills have language for, and stars,
harmonious influences !
The pulse of dew upon the grass
kept his within its number,
And silent shadows from the trees
refreshed him like a slumber.

VII

Wild timid hares were drawn from
woods to share his home-carresses,
Uplooking to his human eyes with
sylvan tenderesses :
The very world, by God's constraint,
from falsehood's ways removing,
Its women and its men became
beside him, true and loving.

VIII

But while in blindness he remained
unconscious of the guiding,
And things provided came without
the sweet sense of providing,
He testified this solemn truth, though
frenzy desolated—
Nor man, nor nature satisfy, whom
only God created !

IX

Like a sick child that knoweth not
his mother, while she blesses
And drops upon his burning brow, the
coolness of her kisses;
That turns his fevered eyes around
—"My mother! where's my
mother?"—

As if such tender words and looks
could come from any other!—

X

The fever gone, with leaps of heart
he sees her bending o'er him,
Her face all pale from watchful love,
the unwearied love she bore him!—
Thus, woke the poet from the dream
his life's long fever gave him,
Beneath those deep pathetic Eyes,
which closed in death to save
him!

XI

Thus? oh, not *thus*! no type of
earth could image that awaking,
Wherein he scarcely heard the chant
of seraphs, round him breaking,
Or felt the new immortal throb of
soul from body parted,
But felt *those eyes alone*, and knew
"My Saviour! *not* deserted!"

XII

Deserted! who hath dreamt that when
the cross in darkness rested
Upon the Victim's hidden face no
love was manifested?
What frantic hands outstretched have
e'er the atoning drops averted?
What tears have washed them from
the soul, that *one* should be
deserted?

XIII

Deserted! God could separate from
His own essence rather,
And Adam's sins *have* swept between
the righteous Son and Father;
Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry,
His universe hath shaken—
It went up single, echoless, "My God,
I am forsaken!"

XIV

It went up from the Holy's lips amid
His lost creation,
That, of the lost, no son should use
those words of desolation,

That earth's worst frenzies, marring
hope, should mar not hope's
fruition,
And I, on Cowper's grave, should see
his rapture, in a vision!

THE WEAKEST THING

I

WHICH is the weakest thing of all
Mine heart can ponder?
The sun, a little cloud can pall
With darkness yonder?
The cloud, a little wind can move
Where'er it listeth?
The wind, a little leaf above,
Though sere, resisteth?

II

What time that yellow leaf was green,
My days were gladder;
But now, whatever Spring may mean,
I must grow sadder.
Ah me! a *leaf* with sighs can wring
My lips asunder—
Then is mine heart the weakest thing
Itself can ponder?

III

Yet, Heart, when sun and cloud are
pined,
And drop together,
And at a blast which is not wind,
The forests wither,
Thou, from the darkening deathly
curse,
To glory breakest,—
The Strongest of the universe
Guarding the weakest!

THE PET-NAME

—"the name
Which from THEIR lips seemed a caress."
MISS MITTFORD'S *Dramatic Scenes*.

I

I HAVE a name, a little name,
Uncadenced for the ear,
Unhonoured by ancestral claim,
Unsanctified by prayer and psalm
The solemn font anear.

II

It never did, to pages wove
For gay romance, belong;
It never dedicate did move,
As "Sacharissa," unto love—
"Orinda," unto song.

III

Though I write books, it will be read
Upon the leaves of none ;
And afterward, when I am dead,
Will ne'er be graved for sight or tread,
Across my funeral stone.

IV

This name, whoever chance to call,
Perhaps your smile may win—
Nay, do not smile ! mine eyelids fall
Over mine eyes and feel withal
The sudden tears within.

V

Is there a leaf that greenly grows
Where summer meadows bloom,
But gathereth the winter snows,
And changeth to the hue of those,
If lasting till they come ?

VI

Is there a word, or jest, or game,
But time encrusteth round
With sad associate thoughts the
same ?
And so to me my very name
Assumes a mournful sound.

VII

My brother gave that name to me
When we were children twain,—
When names acquired baptismally
Were hard to utter, as to see
That life had any pain.

VIII

No shade was on us then, save one
Of chestnuts from the hill—
And through the word our laugh did
run
As part thereof ! The mirth being
done,
He calls me by it still.

IX

Nay, do not smile ! I hear in it
What none of you can hear !
The talk upon the willow seat,
The bird and wind that did repeat
Around, our human cheer.

X

I hear the birthday's noisy bliss,
My sisters' woodland glee,—
My father's praise, I did not miss,
When stooping down he cared to kiss
The poet at his knee ;—

XI

And voices, which to name me, aye
Their tenderest tones were keep-
ing !—
To some I never more can say
An answer, till God wipes away
In heaven, these drops of weeping.

XII

My name to me a sadness wears ;
No murmurs cross my mind :
Now God be thanked for these thick
tears,
Which show, of those departed years,
Sweet memories left behind !

XIII

Now God be thanked for years en-
wrought
With love which softens yet !
Now God be thanked for every thought
Which is so tender it hath caught
Earth's guardian of regret !

XIV

The earth may sadden, not remove,
Our love divinely given ;
And e'en that mortal grief shall prove
The immortality of love,
And lead us nearer Heaven.

QUEEN ANNELIDA AND FALSE
ARCITE

MODERNISED FROM CHAUCER

(1841)

QUEEN ANNELIDA, AND FALSE
ARCITE

I

O THOU fierce God of armies, Mars the
red,
Who in thy frosty country callèd
Thrace,
Within thy grisly temples full of dread,
Art honoured as the patron of that
place,
With the Bellona Pallas, full of grace !
Be present ; guide, sustain this song
of mine,
Beginning which, I cry toward thy
shrine.

II

For deep the hope is sunken in my
mind,
In piteous-hearted English to indite
This story old, which I in Latin
find,
Of Queen Annelida and false Arcite :

Since Time, whose rust can all things
 fret and bite,
 In fretting many a tale of equal fame,
 Hath from our memory nigh de-
 voured this same.

III

Thy favour, Polyhymnia, also deign,
 Who, in thy sisters' green Parnassian
 glade,
 By Helicon, not far from Cirrha's fane,
 Singest with voice memorial in the
 shade,
 Under the laurel which can never
 fade;
 Now grant my ship, that some smooth
 haven win her!
 I follow Statius first, and then
 Corinna.

IV

When Theseus by a long and deathly
 war
 The hardy Scythian race had over-
 come,
 He, laurel-crownèd, in his gold-
 wrought car,
 Returning to his native city home,
 The blissful people for his pomp make
 room,
 And throw their shouts up to the
 stars, and bring
 The general heart out for his honour-
 ing.

V

Before the Duke, in sign of victory,
 The trumpets sound, and in his
 banner large
 Dilates the figure of Mars—and
 men may see,
 In token of glory, many a treasure
 charge,
 Many a bright helm, and many a
 spear and targe,
 Many a fresh knight, and many a
 blissful rout
 On horse and foot, in all the field
 about.

VI

Hippolyte, his wife, the heroic queen
 Of Scythia, conqueress though con-
 quered,
 With Emily, her youthful sistersheen,
 Fair in a car of gold he with him led.
 The ground about her car she over-
 spread

With brightness from the beauty in
 her face,
 Which smiled forth largesses of love
 and grace.

VII

Thus triumphing, and laurel-crownèd
 thus,
 In all the flower of Fortune's high
 providing,
 I leave this noble prince, this Theseus,
 Toward the walls of Athens, bravely
 riding,—
 And seek to bring in, without more
 abiding,
 Something of that whereof I 'gan to
 write
 Of fair Annelida and false Arcite.

VIII

Fierce Mars, who in his furious course
 of ire,
 The ancient wrath of Juno to fulfil,
 Had set the nations' mutual hearts on
 fire
 In Thebes and Argos (so that each
 would kill
 Either with bloody spears), grew
 never still—
 But rushed now here, now there,
 among them both,
 Till each was slain by each, they were
 so wroth.

IX

For when Parthenopæus and Tydeus
 Had perished with Hippomedon,—
 also
 Amphiaraus and proud Capaneus,—
 And when the wretched Theban
 brethren two
 Were slain, and King Adrastus home
 did go—
 So desolate stood Thebes, her halls so
 bare,
 That no man's love could remedy his
 care.

X

And when the old man, Creon, 'gan
 espy
 How darkly the blood royal was
 brought down,
 He held the city in his tyranny,
 And forced the nobles of that region
 To be his friends and dwell within the
 town;

Till half for love of him, and half
for fear,
Those princely persons yielded, and
drew near,—

XI

Among the rest the young Armenian
queen,
Annelida, was in that city living.
She was as beauteous as the sun was
sheen,
Her fame to distant lands such glory
giving
That all men in the world had some
heart-striving
To look on her. No woman, sooth,
can be,
Though earth is rich in fairness, fair
as she.

XII

Young was this queen, but twenty
summers old,
Of middle stature, and such wondrous
beauty,
That Nature, self-delighted, did
behold
A rare work in her—while, in steadfast
duty,
Lucretia and Penelope would suit ye
With a worse model—all things
understood,
She was, in short, most perfect fair
and good.

XIII

The Theban knight eke, to give all
their due,
Was young, and therewithal a lusty
knight.
But he was double in love, and no-
thing true,
Ay, subtler in that craft than any
wight,
And with his cunning won this lady
bright;
So working on her simpleness of
nature,
That she him trusted above every
creature.

XIV

What shall I say? She lovèd Arcite
so,
That if at any hour he parted from
her,
Her heart seemed ready anon to
burst in two;

For he with lowliness had overcome
her:

She thought she knew the heart which
did foredoom her.

But he was false, and all that soft-
ness feigning,—

I trow men need not *learn* such arts
of paining.

XV

And ne'ertheless full mickle business
Had he, before he might his lady
win,—

He swore that he should die of his
distress,

His brain would madden with the
fire within!

Alas, the while! for it was ruth and
sin,

That she, sweet soul, upon his grief
should rue;

But little reckon false hearts as the
true.

XVI

And she to Arcite so subjected her,
That all she did or had seemed his of
right:

No creature in her house met smile
or cheer,

Further than would be pleasant to
Arcite;

There was no lack whereby she did
despite

To his least will—for hers to his was
bent,

And all things which pleased him
made her content.

XVII

No kind of letter to her fair hands
came,

Touching on love, from any kind of
wight,

But him she showed it ere she burned
the same:

So open was she, doing all she
might,

That nothing should be hidden from
her knight,

Lest he for any untruth should up-
braid her,—

The slave of his unspoken will she
made her.

XVIII

He played his jealous fancies over her,
And if he heard that any other man

Spoke to her, would beseech her
straight to swear
To each word—or the speaker had
his ban ;
And out of her sweet wits she almost
ran
For fear ; but all was fraud and
flattery,
Since without love he feignèd jeal-
ousy.

XIX

All which with so much sweetness
suffered she,
Whate'er he willed she thought the
wisest thing ;
And evermore she loved him tenderly,
And did him honour as he were a
king.
Her heart was wedded to him with a
ring,
So eager to be faithful and intent,
That wheresoe'er he wandered, there
it went.

XX

When she would eat he stole away her
thought,
Till little thought for food, I ween,
was kept ;
And when a time for rest the midnight
brought,
She always mused upon him till she
slept,—
When he was absent, secretly she
wept ;
And thus lived Queen Annelida the
fair,
For false Arcite, who worked her
this despair.

XXI

This false Arcite in his new-fangle-
ness,
Because so gentle were her ways and
true,
Took the less pleasure in her stead-
fastness,
And saw another lady proud and
new,
And right anon he clad him in her
hue ;
I know not whether white, or red, or
green.

Betraying fair Annelida the Queen.

XXII

And yet it was no thing to wonder on,
Though he were false—it is the way
of man

(Since Lamech was, who flourished
years ago),
To be in love as false as any can ;
For he was the first father who began
To love two ; and I trow, indeed,
that he
Invented tents as well as bigamy.

XXIII

And having so betrayed her, false
Arcite
Feign'd more, that primal wrong to
justify.
A vicious horse will snort besides his
bite ;
And so he taunted her with treachery,
Swearing he saw thro' her duplicity,
And how she was not loving, but
false-hearted—
The perjured traitor swore thus, and
departed.

XXIV

Alas, alas, what heart could suffer it,
For ruth, the story of her grief to
tell ?
What thinker hath the cunning and
the wit
To image it ? what hearer, strength
to dwell
A room's length off, while I rehearse
the hell
Suffered by Queen Annelida the fair
For false Arcite, who worked her this
despair ?

XXV

She weepeth, wailleth, swooneth
piteously ;
She falleth on the earth dead as a
stone ;
Her graceful limbs are cramped con-
vulsively ;
She speaketh out wild, as her wits
were gone.
No colour, but an ashen paleness—
none—
Touched cheek or lips ; and no word
shook their white,
But " Mercy, cruel heart ! mine own
Arcite ! "

XXVI

Thus it continued, till she pinèd so,
And grew so weak, her feet no more
could bear
Her body, languishing in ceaseless
woe.

Whereof Arcite had neither ruth nor care—

His heart had put out new-green shoots elsewhere ;

Therefore he deigned not on her grief to think,

And reckoned little, did she float or sink.

XXVII

His fine new lady kept him in such narrow

Strict limit, by the bridle, at the end
O' the whip, he feared her least word
as an arrow,—

Her threatening made him, as a bow,
to bend,

And at her pleasure did he turn and
wend ;

Seeing she never granted to this lover
A single grace he could sing " Ios " over.

XXVIII

She drove him forth—she scarcely
deigned to know

That he was servant to her ladyship :
But, lest he should be proud, she kept
him low,

Nor paid his service from a smiling
lip :

She sent him now to land, and now to
ship ;

And giving him all danger to his fill,
She thereby had him at her sovereign
will.

XXIX

Be taught of this, ye prudent women
all,

Warn'd by Annelida and false Arcite ;
Because she chose, himself, " dear
heart " to call

And be so meek, he loved her not
aright.

The nature of man's heart is to delight
In something strange—moreover
(may Heaven save

The wrong'd), the thing they cannot,
they would have.

XXX

Now turn we to Annelida again,
Who pined day by day in languish-
ment.

But when she saw no comfort met her
pain,

Weeping once in a woeful uncon-
straint,

B.P.

She set herself to fashion a com-
plaint,

Which with her own pale hand she
'gan to write,

And sent it to her lover, to Arcite.

THE COMPLAINT OF ANNELIDA
TO FALSE ARCITE

I

The sword of sorrow, whetted sharp
for me

On false delight, with point of memory
Stabb'd so mine heart bliss-bare and
black of hue,

That all to dread is turn'd my dance's
glee,

My face's beauty to despondency—
For nothing it availeth to be true—

And, whosoever is so, she shall rue
Obeying love, and cleaving faithfully

Alway to one, and changing for no
new.

II

I ought to know it well as any wight,
For I loved one with all my heart
and might,

More than myself a hundred-thou-
sand fold,

And call'd him my heart's dear life,
my knight,

And was all his, as far as it was
right ;

His gladness did my blitheness make
of old,

And in his least disease my death was
told ;

Who, on his side, had plighted
lovers' plight,

Me, evermore, his lady and love to
hold.

III

Now is he false—alas, alas !—al-
though

Unwronged ! and acting such a ruth-
less part,

That with a little word he will not
deign

To bring the peace back to my mourn-
ful heart.

Drawn in, and caught up by another's
art,

Right as he will, he laugheth at my
pain ;

While I—I cannot my weak heart
restrain

L

From loving him—still, aye; yet
none I know
To whom of all this grief I can complain.

IV

Shall I complain (ah, piteous and
harsh sound!)
Unto my foe, who gave mine heart
a wound,
And still desireth that the harm be
more?
Now certes, if I sought the whole
earth round,
No other help, no better leech were
found!
My destiny hath shaped it so of yore—
I would not other medicine, nor yet
lore.
I would be ever where I once was
bound;
And what I said, would say for ever-
more.

V

Alas! and where is gone your
gentillesse?
Where gone your pleasant words,
your humbleness?
Where your devotion full of reverent
fear,
Your patient loyalty, your busy
address
To me, whom once you called no-
thing less
Than mistress, sovereign lady, i' the
sphere
O' the world? Ah me! no word, no
look of cheer,
Will you vouchsafe upon my heav-
iness!
Alas your love! I bought it all too
dear.

VI

Now certes, sweet, howe'er you be
The cause so, and so causelessly,
Of this my mortal agony,
Your reason should amend the
failing!
Your friend, your true love, do you
flee,
Who never in time nor yet degree
Grieved you: so may the all-know-
ing He
Save my lorn soul from future wail-
ing.

VII

Because I was so plain, Arcite,
In all my doings, your delight,
Seeking in all things, where I might
In honour,—meek and kind and free;
Therefore you do me such despte.
Alas! howe'er through cruelty
My heart with sorrow's sword you
smite,
You cannot kill its love.—Ah me!

VIII

Ah, my sweet foe, why-do you so
For shame?
Think you that praise, in sooth, will
raise
Your name,
Loving anew, and being untrue
For aye?
Thus casting down your manhood's
crown
In blame,
And working *me* adversity,
The same
Who loves you most—(O God, Thou
know'st!)

Always?

Yet turn again—be fair and plain
Some day;
And then shall this, that seems amiss,
Be game,
All being forgiv'n, while yet from
heav'n

I stay.

IX

Behold, dear heart, I write this to
obtain
Some knowledge, whether I should
pray or 'plain:
Which way is best to force you to be
true?
For either I must have you in my
chain,
Or you, sweet, with the death must
part us twain;
There is no mean, no other way more
new:
And, that Heaven's mercy on my
soul may rue
And let you slay me outright with
this pain,
The whiteness in my cheeks may
prove to you.

X

For hitherto mine own death have I
sought;

Myself I murder with my secret
thought,
In sorrow and ruth of your unkind-
nesses !
I weep, I wail, I fast—all helpeth
nought,
I flee all joy (I mean the name of
aught),
I flee all company, all mirthfulness—
Why, who can make her boast of
more distress
Than I ? To such a plight you have
me brought,
Guiltless (I need no witness) ne'er the-
less.

XI

Shall I go pray and wail my woman-
hood ?
Compared to such a deed, death's
self were good.
What ! ask for mercy, and guiltless—
where's the need ?
And if I wailed my life so,—that you
would
Care nothing, is less feared than
understood :
And if mine oath of love I dared to
plead
In mine excuse,—your scorn would
be its meed.
Ah, love ! it giveth flowers instead of
seed—
Full long ago I might have taken heed.

XII

And though I had you back to-mor-
row again,
I might as well hold April from the rain
As hold you to the vows you vowed
me last.
Maker of all things, and truth's
sovereign,
Where is the truth of man, who hath
it slain,
That she who loveth him should find
him fast
As in a tempest is a rotten mast ?
Is that a *fame* beast which is ever fain
To flee us when restraint and fear are
past ?

XIII

Now mercy, sweet, if I mis-say ;—
Have I said aught is wrong to-day ?
I do not know—my wit's astray—
I fare as doth the song of one who
weepeth ;

For now I 'plain, and now I pray—
I am so mazed, I die away—
Arcite, you have the key for aye
Of all my world, and all the good it
keepeth.

XIV

And in this world there is not one
Who walketh with a sadder moan,
And bears more grief than I have
done ;
And if light slumbers overcome me,
Methinks your image, in the glory
Of skyey azure, stands before me,
Re-vowing the old love you bore me,
And praying for new mercy from me.

XV

Through the long night, this won-
drous sight,
Bear I,
Which haunteth still, the daylight,
till

I die :
But nought of this, your heart, I wis,
Can reach.
Mine eyes down-pour, they never-
more

Are dry,
While to your ruth, and eke your
truth,

I cry—
But, welladay, too far be they
To fetch.
Thus destiny is holding me—
Ah, wretch !
And when I fain would break the
chain,

And try—
Faieth my wit (so weak is it)
With speech.

XVI

Therefore I end thus, since my hope
is o'er—

I give all up both now and evermore ;
And in the balance ne'er again will lay
Mysafety, nor bestudious in love-lore.
But like the swan who, as I heard of
yore,
Singeth life's penance on his deathly
day,

So I sing here my life and woes away,—
Ay, how you, cruel Arcite, wounded
sore,

With memory's point, your poor
Annelida.

XVII

After Annelida, the woeful queen,
 Had written in her own hand in this
 wise,
 With ghastly face, less pale than
 white, I ween,
 Shefella-swooning; then she 'gan arise,

And unto Mars voweth a sacrifice
 Within the temple, with a sorrowful
 bearing,
 And in such phrase as meets your
 present hearing.

EXPLICIT

POEMS

(1844, 1850, 1853.)

A DRAMA OF EXILE

SCENE.—*The outer side of the gate of Eden
 shut fast with cloud, from the depth of
 which revolves a sword of fire self-
 moved. ADAM and EVE are seen in the
 distance flying along the glare.*

Lucifer (alone). Rejoice in the clefts
 of Gehenna,
 My exiled, my host !
 Earth has exiles as hopeless as when a
 Heaven's empire was lost.
 Through the seams of her shaken
 foundations,
 Smoke up in great joy !
 With the smoke of your fierce exulta-
 tions
 Deform and destroy !
 Smoke up with your lurid revenges,
 And darken the face
 Of the white heavens, and taunt
 them with changes
 From glory and grace.
 We, in falling, while destiny strangles,
 Pull down with us all.
 Let them look to the rest of their
 angels !

Who's safe from a fall ?
 HE saves not. Where's Adam ? Can
 pardon
 Requicken that sod ?
 Unkinged is the King of the Garden,
 The image of God.
 Other exiles are cast out of Eden,—
 More curse has been hurled !
 Come up, O my locusts, and feed in
 The green of the world.
 Come up ! we have conquered by evil.
 Good reigns not alone.
 I prevail now ! and, angel or devil,
 Inherit a throne !

*In sudden apparition a watch of innu-
 merable Angels, rank above rank,
 slopes up from around the gate to
 the zenith.*

The ANGEL GABRIEL descends.

Luc. Hail Gabriel, the keeper of
 the gate !
 Now that the fruit is plucked, prince
 Gabriel,
 I hold that Eden is impregnable
 Under thy keeping.
Gab. Angel of the sin,
 Such as thou standest,—pale in the
 drear light
 Which rounds the rebel's work with
 Maker's wrath,—
 Thou shalt be an Idea to all souls,
 A monumental melancholy gloom
 Seen down all ages, whence to mark
 despair
 And measure out the distances from
 good !
 Go from us straightway.

Luc. Wherefore ?
Gab. Lucifer,
 Thy last step in this place, trod
 sorrow up.
 Recoil before that sorrow, if not this
 sword.

Luc. Angels are in the world—
 wherefore not I ?
 Exiles are in the world—wherefore
 not I ?

The cursed are in the world—where-
 fore not I ?

Gab. Depart.

Luc. And where's the logic of
 "depart" ?

Our lady Eve had half been satisfied
 To obey her Maker, if I had not learnt
 To fix my postulate better. Dost
 thou dream

Of guarding some monopoly in
 Heaven

Instead of earth ? Why, I can dream
 with thee

To the length of thy wings.

Gab. I do not dream.
 This is not Heaven, even in a dream ;
 nor earth,

As earth was once, first breathed
among the stars,
Articulate glory from the mouth di-
vine,
To which the myriad spheres thrilled
audibly
Touched like a lute-string, and the
sons of God
Said AMEN, singing it. I know that
this
Is earth not new created but new
cursed—
This, Eden's gate not opened but
built up
With a final cloud of sunset. Do I
dream?
Alas, not so! this is the Eden lost
By Lucifer the serpent! this the sword
(This sword alive with justice and
with fire!)

That smote upon the forehead,
Lucifer
The angel! Wherefore, angel,
go—depart—
Enough is sinned and suffered.
Luc. By no means.
Here's a brave earth to sin and suffer
on!
It holds fast still—it cracks not under
curse;
It holds, like mine immortal. Pre-
sently
We'll sow it thick enough with graves
as green
Or greener, certes, than its knowledge-
tree—
We'll have the cypress for the tree
of life,
More eminent for shadow:—for the
rest
We'll build it dark with towns and
pyramids,
And temples, if it please you:—
we'll have feasts
And funerals also, merrymakes and
wars,
Till blood and wine shall mix and run
along
Right o'er the edges. And good
Gabriel,
(Ye like that word in Heaven!) I too
have strength—
Strength to behold Him and not
worship Him;
Strength to fall from Him and not
cry on Him;

Strength to be in the universe and
yet
Neither God nor His servant. The
red sign
Burnt on my forehead, which you
taunt me with,
Is God's sign that it bows not unto
God,
The potter's mark upon his work, to
show
It rings well to the striker. I and the
earth
Can bear more curse.
Gab. O miserable earth,
O ruined angel!
Luc. Well! and if it be,
I CHOSE this ruin: I elected it
Of my will, not of service. What I do,
I do volitient, not obedient,
And overtop thy crown with my
despair.
My sorrow crowns me. Get thee
back to Heaven,
And leave me to the earth which is
mine own
In virtue of her misery, as I hers
In virtue of my ruin! turn from both
That bright, impassive, passive angel-
hood,
And spare to read us backward any
more
Of your spent hallelujahs.
Gab. Spirit of scorn!
I might say, of unreason! I might say,
That who despairs, acts; that who
acts, connives
With God's relations set in time and
space;
That who elects, assumes a something
good
Which God made possible; that who
lives, obeys
The law of a Life-maker . . .
Luc. Let it pass!
No more, thou Gabriel! What if I
stand up
And strike my brow against the
crystalline
Roofing the creatures,—shall I say
for that,
My stature is too high for me to
stand,—
Henceforward I must sit? Sit *thou*.
Gab. I kneel,
Luc. A heavenly answer. Get
thee to thy Heaven,

And leave my earth to me.

Gab. Through Heaven and earth
God's will moves freely; and I
follow it,

As colour follows light. He over-
flows

The firmamental walls with deity,
Therefore with love: His lightnings
go abroad,

His pity may do so; His angels
must,

Whene'er He gives them charges.

Luc. Verily,
I and my demons—who are spirits of
scorn—

Might hold this charge of standing
with a sword

'Twixt man and his inheritance, as
well

As the benignest angel of you all.

Gab. Thou speakest in the shadow
of thy change.

If thou hadst gazed upon the face of
God

This morning for a moment, thou
hadst known

That only pity fitly can chastise,
While hate avenges.

Luc. As it is, I know
Something of pity. When I reeled
in Heaven,

And my sword grew too heavy for my
grasp,

Stabbing through matter, which it
could not pierce

So much as the first shell of,—toward
the throne;

When I fell back, down,—staring up
as I fell,—

The lightnings holding open my
scathed lids,

And that thought of the infinite of
God,

Hurled after to precipitate descent;
When countless angel faces still and
stern

Pressed out upon me from the level
heavens

Adown the abysmal spaces, and I
fell,

Trampled down by your stillness, and
struck blind

By the sight in your eyes,—'twas
then I knew

How ye could pity, my kind angel-
hood!

Gab. Yet, thou dethroned one,
by the truth in me

Which God keeps in me, I would give
away

All—save that truth and His love
over it,—

To lead thee home again into the
light,

And hear thy voice chant with the
morning stars

When their rays tremble round them
with much song

Sung in more gladness!

Luc. Sing, my Morning Star!
Last beautiful—last heavenly—that
I loved!

If I could drench thy golden locks
with tears,

What were it to this angel?

Gab. What Love is!
And now I have named God.

Luc. Yet Gabriel,
By the lie in me which I keep my-
self,

Thou'rt a false swearer. Were it
otherwise,

What dost thou here, vouchsafing
tender thoughts

To that earth-angel or earth-demon
—which,

Thou and I have not solved his prob-
lem yet

Enough to argue,—that fallen Adam
there,—

That red-clay and a breath! who
must, forsooth,

Live in a new apocalypse of sense,
With beauty and music waving in his
trees

And running in his rivers, to make
glad

His soul made perfect?—is it not for
hope,

A hope within thee, deeper than thy
truth,

Of finally conducting him and his
To fill the vacant thrones of me and
mine,

Which affront Heaven with their
vacuity?

Gab. Angel, there are no vacant
thrones in Heaven

To suit thy empty words. Glory and
life

Fulfil their own depletions; and if
God

Sighed you far from Him, His next
breath drew in

A compensative splendour up the vast,
Flushing the starry arteries!

Luc. With a change!
So, let the vacant thrones and gardens
too

Fill as may please you!—and be
pitiful,

As ye translate that word, to the de-
throned

And exiled, man or angel. The fact
stands,—

That I, the rebel, the cast out and
down,

Am here and will not go; while
there, along

The light to which ye flash the desert
out,

Flies your adopted Adam! your red-
clay

In two kinds, both being flawed.
Why, what is this?

Whose work is this? Whose hand
was in the work?

Against whose hand? In this last
strife, methinks,

I am not a fallen angel!
Gab. Dost thou know

Aught of those exiles?
Luc. Ay: I know they have fled

Wordless all day along the wilder-
ness:

I know they wear, for burden on their
backs,

The thought of a shut gate of Paradise,
And faces of the marshalled cheru-
bim

Shining against, not for them! and
I know

They dare not look in one another's
face,—

As if each were a cherub!
Gab. Dost thou know

Aught of their future?
Luc. Only as much as this:

That evil will increase and multiply
Without a benediction.

Gab. Nothing more?
Luc. Why, so the angels taunt!

What should be more?
Gab. God is more.

Luc. Proving what?
Gab. That He is God,

And capable of saving. Lucifer,
I charge thee by the solitude He kept

Ere He created,—leave the earth to
God!

Luc. My foot is on the earth, firm
as my sin!

Gab. I charge thee by the memory
of Heaven

Ere any sin was done,—leave earth
to God!

Luc. My sin is on the earth, to
reign thereon.

Gab. I charge thee by the choral
song we sang,

When up against the white shore of
our feet,

The depths of the creation swelled
and brake,—

And the new worlds, the beaded foam
and flower

Of all that coil, roared outward into
space

On thunder-edges,—leave the earth
to God!

Luc. My woe is on the earth, to
curse thereby.

Gab. I charge thee by that mourn-
ful Morning Star

Which trembles . . .

Luc. Enough spoken.
As the pine

In norland forest, drops its weight of
snows

By a night's growth, so, growing to-
ward my ends,

Idrop thy counsels. Farewell, Gabriel!
Watch out thy service; I achieve

my will.

And peradventure in the after years,
When thoughtful men shall bend

their spacious brows

Upon the storm and strife seen every-
where

To ruffle their smooth manhood and
break up

With lurid lights of intermittent hope
Their human fear and wrong,—they

may discern
The heart of a lost angel in the earth.

CHORUS OF EDEN SPIRITS

(*Chanting from Paradise, while ADAM and
EVE fly across the Sword-glare*)

HEARKEN, oh hearken! let your souls,
behind you,

Turn, gently moved!
Our voices feel along the Dread to find
you,

O lost, beloved !
Through the thick-shielded and strong-
marshalled angels,

They press and pierce :
Our requiems follow fast on our evan-
gels,—

Voice throbs in verse !
We are but orphaned Spirits left in
Eden

A time ago,
God gave us golden cups, and we
were bidden

To feed you so !
But now our right hand hath no cup
remaining,

No work to do,
The mystic hydromel is spilt, and
staining

The whole earth through !
Most ineradicable stains for showing
(Not interfused !)

That brighter colours were the
world's foregoing;
Than shall be used.

Hearken, oh hearken ! ye shall hear-
ken surely,

For years and years,
The noise beside you, dripping coldly,
purely,

Of spirits' tears !
The yearning to a beautiful denied
you,

Shall strain your powers ;
Ideal sweetnesses shall over-glide you,
Resumed from ours !

In all your music, our pathetic minor
Your ears shall cross ;
And all fair sights shall mind you of
diviner,

With sense of loss !
We shall be near, in all your poet-
languages

And wild extremes,
What time ye vex the desert with vain
angers,

Or mock with dreams !
And when upon you, weary after
roaming,

Death's seal is put,
By the foregone ye shall discern the
coming,
Through eyelids shut.

Spirits of the Trees.

Hark ! the Eden trees are stirring,
Slow and solemn in your hearing !

Oak and linden, palm and fir,
Tamarisk and juniper,
Each still throbbing in vibration
Since that crowning of creation
When the God-breath spake abroad,
" *Let us make man like to God* " :—
And the pine stood quivering
As the awful word went by ;
Like a vibrant music-string
Stretched from mountain-peak to
sky !

And the platan did expand,
Slow and gradual, branch and head ;
And the cedar's strong black shade
Fluttered brokenly and grand !—
Grove and wood were swept aslant
In emotion jubilant.

Voice of the same, but softer.

Which divine impulsion cleaves
In dim movements to the leaves
Dropt and lifted, dropt and lifted
In the sunlight greenly sifted,—
In the sunlight and the moonlight
Greenly sifted through the trees.
Ever wave the Eden trees
In the nightlight and the moonlight,
With a rustling of green branches
Shaded off to resonances,
Never stirred by rain or breeze !
Fare ye well, farewell !
The sylvan sounds, no longer audible,
Expire at Eden's door :
Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some murmur which ye
heard before :
Farewell ! the trees of Eden
Ye shall hear nevermore.

River-Spirits.

Hark ! the flow of the four rivers—
Hark the flow !
How the silence round you shivers,
While our voices through it go,
Cold and clear.

A softer voice.

Think a little, while ye hear,—
Of the banks
Where the willows and the deer
Crowd in intermingled ranks,
As if all would drink at once,
Where the living water runs :—
Of the fishes' golden edges
Flashing in and out the sedges ;
Of the swans on silver thrones,
Floating down the winding streams

With impassive eyes turned shore-ward,

And a chant of undertones,—
And the lotos leaning forward
To help them into dreams.

Fare ye well, farewell !

The river-sounds, no longer audible,
Expire at Eden's door :
Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some murmur which ye
heard before.

Farewell ! the streams of Eden
Ye shall hear nevermore.

Bird-Spirit.

I am the nearest nightingale
That singeth in Eden after you ;
And I am singing loud and true,
And sweet,—I do not fail !
I sit upon a cypress bough,
Close to the gate, and I fling my
song

Over the gate and through the mail
Of the warden angels marshalled
strong,—

Over the gate and after you !
And the warden angels let it pass,
Because the poor brown bird, alas !
Sings in the garden, sweet and
true,

And I build my song of high pure
notes,

Note over note, height over
height,

Till I strike the arch of the Infi-
nite,

And I bridge abysmal agonies
With strong, clear calms of har-
monies,—

And something abides, and some-
thing floats,

In the song which I sing after you :
Fare ye well, farewell !

The creature sounds, no longer audible,
Expire at Eden's door :

Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some cadence which ye
heard before.

Farewell ! the birds of Eden
Ye shall hear nevermore.

Flower-Spirits.

We linger, we linger,
The last of the throng !
Like the tones of a singer
Who loves his own song.
We are spirit-aromas

Of blossom and bloom ;
We call your thoughts home as

Ye breathe our perfume,—
To the amaranth's splendour

Afire on the slopes ;

To the lily-bells tender,

And grey heliotropes :

To the poppy-plains keeping
Such dream-breath and blee,

That the angels there stepping

Grew whiter to see :

To the nook, set with moly,

Ye jested one day in,

Till your smile waxed too holy,

And left your lips praying :

To the rose in the bower-place,

That-dripped o'er you sleeping ;

To the asphodel flower-place,

Ye walked ankle-deep in !

We pluck at your raiment,

We stroke down your hair,—

We faint in our lament,

And pine into air.

Fare ye well, farewell !

The Eden scents, no longer sensible,

Expire at Eden's door :

Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some fragrance which ye
knew before.

Farewell ! the flowers of Eden

Ye shall smell nevermore.

[*There is silence. ADAM and EVE fly on,
and never look back. Only a colossal
shadow, as of the dark ANGEL passing
quickly, is cast upon the Sword-glare.*]

SCENE.—*The extremity of the Sword-
glare.*

Adam. Pausing a moment on this
outer edge

Where the supernal sword-glare cuts
in light

The dark exterior desert,—hast thou
strength,

Beloved, to look behind us to the
gate ?

Eve. Have I not strength to look
up to thy face ?

Adam. We need be strong : yon
spectacle of cloud

Which seals the gate up to the final
doom,

Is God's seal manifest. There seem
to lie

A hundred thunders in it, dark and
dead ;

The unmolten lightnings vein it motionless ;

And, outward from its depth, the self-moved sword

Swings slow its awful gnomon of red fire

From side to side,—in pendulous horror slow,—

Across the stagnant, ghastly glare thrown flat

On the intermediate ground from that to this.

The angelic hosts, the archangelic pomps,

Thrones, dominations, princedoms, rank on rank,

Rising sublimely to the feet of God, On either side and overhead the gate,

Show like a glittering and sustained smoke

Drawn to an apex. That their faces shine

Betwixt the solemn clasping of their wings,

Clasped high to a silver point above their heads,—

We only guess from hence, and not discern.

Eve. Though we were near enough to see them shine,

The shadow on thy face were awfuller,

To me, at least,—to me—than all their light.

Adam. What is this, Eve ? thou droppest heavily

In a heap earthward, and thy body heaves

Under the golden floodings of thine hair !

Eve. O Adam, Adam ! by that name of Eve—

Thine Eve, thy life—which suits me little now,

Seeing that I confess myself thy death And thine undoer, as the snake was mine,—

I do adjure thee, put me straight away,

Together with my name. Sweet, punish me !

O Love, be just ! and, ere we pass beyond

The light cast outward by the fiery sword.

Into the dark which earth must be to us,

Bruise my head with thy foot,—as the curse said

My seed shall the first tempter's : strike with curse,

As God struck in the garden ! and as He,

Being satisfied with justice and with wrath,

Did roll His thunder gentler at the close,—

Thou, peradventure, may'st at last recoil

To some soft need of mercy. Strike, my lord !

I, also, after tempting, writhe on the ground ;

And I would feed on ashes from thine hand,

As suits me, O my tempted !

Adam. My beloved, Mine Eve and life—I have no other name

For thee or for the sun than what ye are,

My utter life and light ! If we have fallen,

It is that we have sinned,—we : God is just :

And, since His curse doth comprehend us both,

It must be that His balance holds the weights

Of first and last sin on a level. What !

Shall I who had not virtue to stand straight

Among the hills of Eden, here assume To mend the justice of the perfect God,

By piling up a curse upon His curse, Against thee—thee—

Eve. For so, perchance, thy God Might take thee into grace for scorning me ;

Thy wrath against the sinner giving proof

Of inward abrogation of the sin !

And so, the blessed angels might come down

And walk with thee as erst,—I think they would,—

Because I was not near to make them sad,

Or soil the rustling of their innocence.

Adam. They know me. I am
deepest in the guilt,
If last in the transgression.

Eve. Thou!

Adam. If God,
Who gave the right and joyance of
the world

Both unto thee and me,—gave thee to
me,

The best gift last, the last sin was
the worst,

Which sinned against more comple-
ment of gifts

And grace of giving. God! I render
back

Strong benediction and perpetual
praise

From mortal feeble lips (as incense-
smoke,

Out of a little censer, may fill Heaven),
That Thou, in striking my benumbed
hands

And forcing them to drop all other
boons

Of beauty, and dominion, and de-
light,—

Hast left this well-beloved Eve—this
life

Within life—this best gift between
their palms,

In gracious compensation!

Eve. Is it thy voice?
Or some saluting angel's—calling
home

My feet into the garden?

Adam. O my God!
I, standing here between the glory
and the dark,—

The glory of Thy wrath projected
forth

From Eden's wall, the dark of our
distress

Which settles a step off in that drear
world—

Lift up to Thee the hands from whence
hath fallen

Only creation's sceptre,—thanking
Thee

That rather Thou hast cast me out
with *her*,

Than left me lorn of her in Paradise,
With angel looks and angel songs
around

To show the absence of her eyes and
voice,

And make society full desertness

Without her use in comfort.

Eve. Where is loss?
Am I in Eden? can another speak
Mine own love's tongue?

Adam. Because with *her*, I stand
Upright, as far as can be in this fall,

And look away from Heaven, which
doth accuse,

And look away from earth which
doth convict,

Into her face, and crown my dis-
crowned brow

Out of her love, and put the thought
of her

Around me, for an Eden full of birds,
And lift her body up—thus—to my
heart,

And with my lips upon her lips,—
thus, thus,—

Do quicken and sublimate my mortal
breath,

Which cannot climb against the
grave's steep sides

But overtops this grief!

Eve. I am renewed!
My eyes grow with the light which is
in thine;

The silence of my heart is full of sound.
Hold me up—so! Because I com-
prehend

This human love, I shall not be afraid
Of any human death; and yet be-
cause

I know this strength of love, I seem to
know

Death's strength by that same sign.
Kiss on my lips,

To shut the door close on my rising
soul,—

Lest it pass outwards in astonishment,
And leave thee lonely.

Adam. Yet thou liest, Eve,
Bent heavily on thyself across mine
arm,

Thy face flat to the sky.

Eve. Ay! and the tears
Running, as it might seem, my life
from me,

They run so fast and warm. Let me
lie so,

And weep so,—as if in a dream or
prayer,—

Unfastening, clasp by clasp, the hard,
tight thought

Which clipped my heart and showed
me evermore

Loathed of thy justice as I loathe the
snake,
And as the pure ones loathe our sin.
To-day,
All day, beloved, as we fled across
This desolating radiance cast by
swords
Not suns,—my lips prayed soundless
to myself,
Striking against each other—O Lord
God!
(’Twas so I prayed), I ask Thee by my
sin,
And by Thy curse, and by Thy blame-
less heavens,
Make dreadful haste to hide me from
Thy face
And from the face of my beloved here
For whom I am no helpmeet, quick
away
Into the new dark mystery of death!
I will lie still there, I will make no
plaint,
I will not sigh, nor sob, nor speak a
word,
Nor struggle to come back beneath
the sun,
Where peradventure I might sin anew
Against Thy mercy and his pleasure.
Death,
O death, whate’er it be, is good enough
For such as I.—While for mine Adam
here
No voice shall say again in Heaven or
earth,
“*It is not good for him to be alone.*”
Adam. And was it good for such a
prayer to pass,
My unkind Eve, betwixt our mutual
lives?
If I am exiled, must I be bereaved?
Eve. ’Twas an ill prayer: it shall
be prayed no more;
And God did use it for a foolishness,
Giving no answer. Now my heart
has grown
Too high and strong for such a foolish
prayer;
Love makes it strong: and since I
was the first
In the transgression, with a steady foot
I will be first to tread from this sword-
glare
Into the outer darkness of the waste,—
And thus I do it,
Adam. Thus I follow thee,

As erewhile in the sin.—What sounds!
what sounds!
I feel a music which comes straight
from Heaven,
As tender as a watering dew.
Eve. I think
That angels—not those guarding
Paradise,—
But the love-angels who came erst to us,
And when we said “God,” fainted
unawares
Back from our mortal presence unto
God
(As if He drew them inward in a
breath),
His name being heard of them,—I
think that they
With sliding voices lean from heavenly
towers,
Invisible, but gracious. Hark—how
soft!

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS

Faint and tender.

Mortal man and woman,
Go upon your travel!
Heaven assist the Human
Smoothly to unravel
All that web of pain
Wherein ye are holden.
Do ye know our voices
Chanting down the Golden?
Do ye guess our choice is,
Being un beholden,
To be hearkened by you yet again?

This pure door of opal
God hath shut between us,—
Us, His shining people,
You, who once have seen us
And are blinded new!
Yet, across the doorway,
Past the silence reaching,
Farewells evermore may,
Blessing in the teaching,
Glide from us to you.

First semichorus.

Think how erst your Eden,
Day on day succeeding,
With our presence glow’d.
We came as if the Heavens were
bowed
To a milder music rare!
Ye saw us in our solemn treading,
Treading down the steps of cloud,

While our wings, outspreading
Double calms of whiteness,
Dropped superfluous brightness
Down from stair to stair.

Second semichorus.

Or oft, abrupt though tender,
While ye gazed on space,
We flashed our angel-splendour
In either human face!
With mystic lilies in our hands,
From the atmospheric bands
Breaking with a sudden grace,
We took you unaware!
While our feet struck glories
Outward, smooth and fair,
Which we stood on floorwise,
Platformed in mid air.

First semichorus.

Or oft, when Heaven descended,
Stood we in your wondering sight
In a mute apocalypse!
With dumb vibrations on our lips,
From hosannas ended;
And grand half-vanishings
Of the empyreal things,
Within our eyes, belated:
Till the heavenly Infinite
Falling off from the Created,
Left our inward contemplation
Opening into ministration.

Chorus.

Then upon our axle turning
Of great joy to sympathy,
We sang out the morning,
Broadening up the sky—
Or we drew
Our music through
The noontide's hush and heat and
shine,
Informed with our intense Divine—
Interrupted vital notes
Palpitating hither, thither,
Burning out into the æther,—
Sensible like fiery notes!—
Or, whenever twilight drifted
Through the cedar masses,
The globed sun we lifted,
Trailing purple, trailing gold
Out between the passes
Of the mountains manifold,
To anthems slowly sung!
While he, weary, half in swoon,
For joy to hear our climbing tune

Transpierce the stars' concentric
rings,—
The burden of his glory flung
In broken lights upon our wings.

[*The chant dies away confusedly, and
LUCIFER appears.*]

Luc. Now may all fruits be
pleasant to thy lips,
Beautiful Eve! The times have
somewhat changed
Since thou and I had talk beneath a
tree,
Albeit ye are not gods yet.
Eve. Adam! hold
My right hand strongly. It is
Lucifer—

And we have love to lose.

Adam. I' the name of God,
Go apart from us, O thou Lucifer!
And leave us to the desert thou hast
made
Out of thy treason. Bring no serpent-
slime
Athwart this path kept holy to our
tears,
Or we may curse thee with their
bitterness.

Luc. Curse freely! curses thicken.
Why, this Eve
Who thought me once part worthy of
her ear

And somewhat wiser than the other
beasts,—
Drawing together her large globes of
eyes,
The light of which is throbbing in and
out

Their steadfast continuity of gaze,—
Knots her fair eyebrows in so hard a
knot,

And down from her white heights of
womanhood,
Looks on me so amazed,—I scarce
should fear

To wager such an apple as she plucked,
Against one riper from the tree of life,
That she could curse too—as a
woman may—

Smooth in the vowels.

Eve. So—speak wickedly!
I like it best so. Let thy words be
wounds,—

For, so, I shall not fear thy power to
hurt:

Trench on the forms of good by open ill—

For, so, I shall wax strong and grand with scorn,

Scorning myself for ever trusting thee As far as thinking, ere a snake ate dust, He could speak wisdom.

Luc. Our new gods, it seems, Deal more in thunders than in courtesies :

And, sooth, mine own Olympus, which anon

I shall build up to loud-voiced imagery From all the wandering visions of the world,—

May show worse railing than our lady Eve

Pours o'er the rounding of her argent arm.

But why should this be ? Adam pardoned Eve.

Adam. Adam loved Eve. Jehovah pardon both !

Eve. Adam forgave Eve—because loving Eve.

Luc. So, well. Yet Adam was undone of Eve,

As both were by the snake. Therefore forgive,

In like wise, fellow-temptress, the poor snake—

Who stung there, not so poorly !

[*Aside.* *Eve.* Hold thy wrath,

Beloved Adam ! let me answer him ; For this time he speaks truth, which

we should hear, And asks for mercy, which I most

should grant,

In like wise, as he tells us—in like wise !

And therefore I thee pardon, Lucifer, As freely as the streams of Eden

flowed When we were happy by them. So, depart ;

Leave us to walk the remnant of our time

Out mildly in the desert. Do not seek

To harm us any more or scoff at us Or ere the dust be laid upon our face

To find there the communion of the dust

And issue of the curse.—Go. *Adam.* At once, go.

Luc. Forgive ! and go ! Ye images of clay,

Shrunk somewhat in the mould,— what jest is this ?

What words are these to use ? By what thought

Conceive ye of me ? Yesterday—a snake !

To-day—what ? *Adam.* A strong spirit.

Eve. A sad spirit.

Adam. Perhaps a fallen angel.—

Who shall say !

Luc. Who told thee, Adam ?

Adam. Thou ! The prodigy

Of thy vast brows and melancholy eyes

Which comprehend the heights of some great fall.

I think that thou hast one day worn a crown

Under the eyes of God.

Luc. And why of God ?

Adam. It were no crown else.

Verily, I think

Thou'rt fallen far. I had not yesterday

Said it so surely ; but I know to-day Grief by grief, sin by sin !

Luc. A crown, by a crown.

Adam. Ay, mock me ! now I know

more than I knew :

Now I know thou art fallen below hope Of final re-ascent.

Luc. Because ?

Adam. Because

A spirit who expected to see God, Though at the last point of a million

years, Could dare no mockery of a ruined

man Such as this Adam.

Luc. Who is high and bold—

Be it said passing !—of a good red clay

Discovered on some top of Lebanon, Or haply of Aornus, beyond sweep

Of the black eagle's wing ! A furlong lower

Had made a meeker king for Eden. Soh !

Is it not possible, by sin and grief (To give the things your names)

that spirits should rise Instead of falling ?

Adam. Most impossible.

The Highest being the Holy and the Glad,

Whoever rises must approach delight
And sanctity in the act.

Luc. Ha, my clay-king!
Thou wilt not rule by wisdom very long

The after generations. Earth, me-thinks,

Will disinherit thy philosophy
For a new doctrine suited to thine heirs,

And class these present dogmas with the rest

Of the old-world traditions—Eden fruits

And saurian fossils.

Eve. Speak no more with him,
Beloved! it is not good to speak with him.

Go from us, Lucifer, and speak no more!

We have no pardon which thou dost not scorn,

Nor any bliss, thou seest, for coveting,
Nor innocence for staining. Being bereft,

We would be alone.—Go.

Luc. Ah! ye talk the same,
All of you—spirits and clay—go, and depart!

In Heaven they said so; and at Eden's gate,—

And here, reiterant, in the wilderness!
None saith, "Stay with me, for thy face is fair!"

None saith, "Stay with me, for thy voice is sweet!"

And yet I was not fashioned out of clay.

Look on me, woman! Am I beautiful?

Eve. Thou hast a glorious darkness,

Luc. Nothing more?

Eve. I think no more.

Luc. False Heart—thou thinkest more!

Thou canst not choose but think, as I praise God,

Unwillingly but fully, that I stand
Most absolute in beauty. As yourselves

Were fashioned very good at best, so we

Sprang very beauteous from the creant Word

Which thrilled around us—God Himself being moved

When that august work of a perfect shape

His dignities of sovran angelhood,
Swept out into the universe,—divine
With thunderous movements, earnest looks of gods,

And silver-solemn clash of cymbal wings!

Whereof was I, in motion and in form,
A part not poorest. And yet,—yet,

perhaps,
This beauty which I speak of, is not here,

As God's voice is not here, nor even my crown—

I do not know. What is this thought or thing

Which I call beauty? is it thought, or thing?

Is it a thought accepted for a thing?
Or both? or neither?—a pretext—a word?

Its meaning flutters in me like a flame
Under my own breath: my perceptions reel

For evermore around it, and fall off,
As if it too were holy.

Eve. Which it is.

Adam. The essence of all beauty,
I call love.

The attribute, the evidence, and end,
The consummation to the inward sense,

Of beauty apprehended from without,
I still call love. As form, when colourless,

Is nothing to the eye,—that pine-tree there,

Without its black and green, being all a blank,—

So, without love, is beauty undiscerned

In man or angel. Angel! rather ask
What love is in thee, what love moves to thee,

And what collateral love moves on with thee;

Then shalt thou know if thou art beautiful.

Luc. Love! what is love? I lose it. Beauty and love!

I darken to the image. Beauty—Love!

[He fades away, while a low music sound

Adam. Thou art pale, Eve.

Eve. The precipice of ill
Down this colossal nature, dizzies
me—

And, hark! the starry harmony re-
mote

Seems measuring the heights from
whence he fell.

Adam. Think that we have not
fallen so. By the hope

And aspiration, by the love and faith,
We do exceed the stature of this angel.

Eve. Happier we are than he is,
by the death!

Adam. Or rather, by the life of
the Lord God!

How dim the angel grows, as if that
blast

Of music swept him back into the
dark.

*[The music is stronger, gathering itself into
uncertain articulation.]*

Eve. It throbs in on us like a
plaintive heart,

Pressing, with slow pulsations, vibra-
tive,

Its gradual sweetness through the
yielding air,

To such expression as the stars may
use,

Most starry-sweet and strange! With
every note

That grows more loud, the angel grows
more dim,

Receding in proportion to approach,
Until he stand afar,—a shade.

Adam. Now, words.

SONG OF THE MORNING STAR TO
LUCIFER

*He fades utterly away and vanishes, as it
proceeds.*

Mine orb'd image sinks

Back from thee, back from thee,

As thou art fallen, methinks,

Back from me, back from me.

O my light-bearer,

Could another fairer

Lack to thee, lack to thee?

Ai, ai, Heosphoros!

I loved thee with the fiery love of
stars

Who love by burning, and by loving
move,

Too near the throned Jehovah not to
love.

Ai, ai, Heosphoros!

Their brows flash fast on me from
gliding cars,

Pale-passioned for my loss.

Ai, ai, Heosphoros!

Mine orb'd heats drop cold

Down from thee, down from thee,

As fell thy grace of old

Down from me, down from me.

O my light-bearer,

Is another fairer

Won to thee, won to thee?

Ah, ah, Heosphoros,

Great love preceded loss,

Known to thee, known to thee.

Ah, ah!

Thou, breathing thy communicable
grace

Of life into my light,

Mine astral faces, from thine angel
face,

Hast inly fed,

And flooded me with radiance over-
much

From thy pure height.

Ah, ah!

Thou, with calm, floating pinions both
ways spread,

Erect, irradiated,

Didst sting my wheel of glory

On, on before thee,

Along the Godlight, by a quickening
touch!

Ha, ha!

Around, around the firmamental
ocean,

I swam expanding with delirious fire!

Around, around, around, in blind
desire

To be drawn upward to the Infinite—

Ha, ha!

Until, the motion flinging out the
motion

To a keen whirl of passion and avid-
ity,—

To a blind whirl of rapture and de-
light,—

I wound in gyant orbits, smooth and
white

With that intense rapidity!

Around, around,

I wound and interwound,

While all the cyclic heavens about me
spun!

Stars, planets, suns, and moons, dilated broad
 Then flashed together into a single sun,
 And wound, and wound in one;
 And as they wound I wound,—around around,
 In a great fire I almost took for God!
 Ha, ha, Heosphoros!

Thine angel glory sinks
 Down from me, down from me—
 My beauty falls, methinks,
 Down from thee, down from thee!
 O my light-bearer,
 O my path-preparer,
 Gone from me, gone from me!
 Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

I cannot kindle underneath the brow
 Of this new angel here, who is not
 Thou:

All things are altered since that time ago,—

And if I shine at eve, I shall not know!
 I am strange—I am slow!

Ah, ah, Heosphoros!
 Henceforward, human eyes of lovers
 be

The only sweetest sight that I shall
 see,

With tears between the looks raised
 up to me.

Ah, ah!
 When, having wept all night, at break
 of day,

Above the folded hills they shall survey

My light, a little trembling, in the
 grey.

Ah, ah!
 And gazing on me, such shall comprehend,

Through all my piteous pomp at morn
 or even,

And melancholy leaning out of Heaven,
 That love, their own divine, may

change or end,
 That love may close in loss!

Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

SCENE.—*Farther on. A wild open country seen vaguely in the approaching night.*

Adam. How doth the wide and
 melancholy earth
 Gather her hills around us, grey and
 ghast,

B.T.

And stare with blank significance of
 loss

Right in our faces! Is the wind up?
Eve. Nay.

Adam. And yet the cedars and the
 junipers

Rock slowly through the mist, without
 a sound;

And shapes which have no certainty
 of shape

Drift dusky in and out between the
 pines,

And loom along the edges of the hills,
 And lie flat, curdling in the open
 ground—

Shallows without a body, which contract

And lengthen as we gaze on them.
Eve. O Life

Which is not man's nor angel's!
 What is this?

Adam. No cause for fear. The
 circle of God's life

Contains all life beside.
Eve. I think the earth

Is crazed with curse, and wanders
 from the sense

Of those first laws affixed to form and
 space

Or ever she knew sin!

Adam. We will not fear:
 We were brave sinning.

Eve. Yea, I plucked the fruit
 With eyes upturned to Heaven, and
 seeing there

Our god-thrones, as the tempter said,
 —not God.

My heart, which beat then, sinks.
 The sun hath sunk

Out of sight with our Eden.
 Adam. Night is near.

Eve. And God's curse, nearest.
 Let us travel back,

And stand within the sword-glare till
 we die,

Believing it is better to meet death
 Than suffer desolation.

Adam. Nay, beloved!

We must not pluck death from the
 Maker's hand,

As erst we plucked the apple: we
 must wait

Until He gives death as He gave us
 life,

Nor murmur faintly o'er the primal
 gift

M

Because we spoil its sweetness with
our sin.

Eve. Ah, ah! Dost thou discern
what I behold?

Adam. I see all. How the spirits
in thine eyes,
From their dilated orbits, bound before
To meet the spectral Dread!

Eve. I am afraid—
Ah, ah! The twilight bristles wild
with shapes
Of intermittent motion, aspect vague
And mystic bearings, which o'er-
creep the earth,
Keeping slow time with horrors in
the blood.

How near they reach . . . and far!
How grey they move—

Treading upon the darkness without
feet,—

And fluttering on the darkness with-
out wings!

Some run like dogs, with noses to the
ground;

Some keep one path, like sheep;
some rock like trees;

Some glide like a fallen leaf; and some
flow on,

Copious as rivers.

Adam. Some spring up like fire—
And some coil . . .

Eve. Ah, ah! Dost thou pause
to say

Like what?—coil like the serpent,
when he fell

From all the emerald splendour of
his height,

And writhed,—and could not climb
against the curse,

Not a ring's length. I am afraid—
afraid—

I think it is God's will to make me
afraid,—

Permitting THESE to haunt us in the
place

Of His beloved angels—gone from us
Because we are not pure. Dear Pity

of God,
That didst permit the angels to go
home

And live no more with us who are not
pure,

Save us too from a loathly company—
Almost as loathly in our eyes, perhaps,

As we are in the purest! Pity us—
Us too! nor shut us in the dark, away

From verity and from stability,
Or what we name such through the
precedence

Of earth's adjusted uses,—leave us
not

To doubt betwixt our senses and our
souls,

Which are the most distraught and
full of pain

And weak of apprehension.

Adam. Courage, Sweet!
The mystic shapes ebb back from us,
and drop

With slow concentric movement,
each on each,—

Expressing wider spaces,—and col-
lapsed

In lines more definite for imagery
And clearer for relation, till the
throng

Of shapeless spectra merge into a
few

Distinguishable phantasms vague
and grand

Which sweep out and around us
vastly

And hold us in a circle and a calm.

Eve. Strange phantasms of pale
shadow! there are twelve.

Thou who didst name all lives, hast
names for these?

Adam. Methinks this is the zodiac
of the earth,

Which rounds us with its visionary
dread,—

Responding with twelve shadowy
signs of earth,

In fantasmic apposition and approach,
To those celestial, constellated twelve

Which palpitate adown the silent
nights

Under the pressure of the hand of God
Stretched wide in benediction. At

this hour,
Not a star pricketh the flat gloom of
heaven!

But, girdling close our nether wilder-
ness,

The zodiac-figures of the earth loom
slow,—

Drawn out, as suiteth with the place
and time,

In twelve colossal shades instead of
stars,

Through which the ecliptic line of
mystery

Strikes bleakly with an unrelenting
scope,

Foreshowing life and death.

Eve. By dream or sense,

Do we see this?

Adam. Our spirits have climbed
high

By reason of the passion of our grief,—
And, from the top of sense, looked
over sense,

To the significance and heart of things
Rather than things themselves.

Eve. And the dim twelve . . .

Adam. Are dim exponents of the
creature-life

As earth contains it. Gaze on them,
beloved!

By stricter apprehension of the sight,
Suggestions of the creatures shall
assuage

Thy terror of the shadows;—what
is known

Subduing the unknown and taming it
From all prodigious dread. That
phantasm, there,

Presents a lion,—albeit twenty times
As large as any lion—with a roar
Set soundless in his vibratory jaws,
And a strange horror stirring in his
mane!

And, there, a pendulous shadow
seems to weigh—

Good against ill, perchance; and
there, a crab

Puts coldly out its gradual shadow-
claws,

Like a slow blot that spreads,—till
all the ground,

Crawled over by it, seems to crawl
itself;

A bull stands horned here with gib-
bous glooms;

And a ram likewise! and a scorpion
writhes

Its tail in ghastly slime and stings
the dark!

This way a goat leaps with wild
blank of beard;

And here, fantastic fishes dusky
float,

Using the calm for waters, while
their fins

Throb out slow rhythms along the
shallow air!

While images more human—

Eve. How he stands,

That phantasm of a man—who is not
thou!

Two phantasms of two men!

Adam. One that sustains,
And one that strives!—resuming,
so, the ends

Of manhood's curse of labour.¹ Dost
thou see

That phantasm of a woman?—

Eve. I have seen—

But look off to those small human-
ities,²

Which draw me tenderly across my
fear,—

Lesser and fainter than my woman-
hood

Or yet thy manhood—with strange
innocence

Set in the misty lines of head and hand
They lean together! I would gaze on
them

Longer and longer, till my watching
eyes,—

As the stars do in watching any-
thing,—

Should light them forward from
their outline vague,

To clear configuration—

*Two Spirits, of organic and inorganic
nature, arise from the ground.*

But what Shapes
Rise up between us in the open space,—
And thrust me into horror, back from
hope!

Adam. Colossal Shapes—twin
sovrn images,—

With a disconsolate, blank majesty
Set in their wondrous faces!—with
no look,

And yet an aspect—a significance
Of individual life and passionate ends,
Which overcomes us gazing.

O bleak sound!
O shadow of sound, O phantasm of
thin sound!

How it comes, wheeling as the pale
moth wheels,

¹ Adam recognises in *Aquarius*, the water-
bearer, and *Sagittarius*, the archer, distinct types
of the man bearing and the man combating,—
the passive and active forms of human labour.
I hope that the preceding zodiacal signs—trans-
ferred to the earthly shadow and representative
purpose—of Aries, Taurus, Cancer, Leo, Libra,
Scorpio, Capricornus, and Pisces, are sufficiently
obvious to the reader.

² Her maternal instinct is excited by *Gemini*.

Wheeling and wheeling in continuous
wail
Around the cyclic zodiac, and gains
force,
And gathers, settling coldly like a
moth,
On the wan faces of these images
We see before us ; whereby modified,
It draws a straight line of articulate
song
From out that spiral faintness of
lament—
And, by one voice, expresses many
griefs.

First Spirit.

I am the spirit of the harmless earth !
God spake me softly out among the
stars,
As softly as a blessing of much
worth,—
And then, His smile did follow un-
awares,
That all things, fashioned so for use
and duty,
Might shine anointed with His chrism
of beauty—

Yet I wail !

I drave on with the worlds exultingly,
Obliquely down the Godlight's
gradual fall—
Individual aspect and complexity
Of gyrotory orb and interval
Lost in the fluent motion of delight
Toward the high ends of Being be-
yond sight—

Yet I wail !

Second Spirit.

I am the spirit of the harmless beasts,
Of flying things, and creeping
things, and swimming ;
Of all the lives, erst set at silent feasts,
That found the love-kiss on the
goblet brimming
And tasted in each drop within the
measure
The sweetest pleasure of their Lord's
good pleasure—

Yet I wail !

Whata full hum of life, around His lips,
Bore witness to the fulness of crea-
tion !
How all the grand words were full-
laden ships
Each sailing onward from enuncia-
tion

To separate existence,—and each
bearing

The creature's power of joying, hop-
ing, fearing !—

Yet I wail !

Eve. They wail, beloved ! they
speak of glory and God,
And they wail—wail. That burden
of the song
Drops from it like its fruit, and
heavily falls

Into the lap of silence !

Adam.

Hárk, again !

First Spirit.

I was so beautiful, so beautiful,
My joy stood up within me bold
to add
A word to God's,—and, when His
work was full,
To " very good," responded " very
glad !"
Filtered through roses, did the light
enclose me,
And bunches of the grape swam blue
across me—
Yet I wail !

Second Spirit.

I bounded with my panthers ! I re-
joiced
In my young tumbling lions rolled
together !
My stag, the river at his fetlocks,
poised
Then dipped his antlers through
the golden weather
In the same ripple which the alligator
Left, in his joyous troubling of the
water—
Yet I wail !

First Spirit.

O my deep waters, cataract and
flood,—
What wordless triumph did your
voices render !
O mountain-summits, where the
angels stood,
And shook from head and wing
thick dews of splendour !
How, with a holy quiet, did your
Earthy
Accept that Heavenly—knowing ye
were worthy !—
Yet I wail !

Second Spirit.

O my wild wood-dogs, with your
listening eyes!

My horses—my ground-eagles, for
swift fleeing!

My birds, with viewless wings of har-
monies,—

My calm cold fishes of a silver
being,—

How happy were ye, living and pos-
sessing,

O fair half-souls capacious of full
blessing.

Yet I wail!

First Spirit.

I wail, I wail! Now hear my charge
to-day,

Thou man, thou woman, marked
as the misdoers

By God's sword at your backs! I lent
my clay

To make your bodies, which had
grown more flowers:

And now, in change for what I lent,
ye give me

The thorn to vex, the tempest-fire to
cleave me—

And I wail!

Second Spirit.

I wail, I wail! Behold ye that I
fasten

My sorrow's fang upon your souls
dishonoured?

Accursed transgressors! down the
steep ye hasten,—

Your crown's weight on the world,
to drag it downward

Unto your ruin. Lo! my lions,
scenting

The blood of wars, roar hoarse and
unrelenting—

And I wail!

First Spirit.

I wail, I wail! Do ye hear that I
wail?

I had no part in your transgression—
none!

My roses on the bough did bud not
pale—

My rivers did not loiter in the sun;
I was obedient. Wherefore in my
centre

Do I thrill at this curse of death and
winter?—

And I wail!

Second Spirit.

I wail, I wail! I wail in the assault
Of undeserved perdition, sorely
wounded!

My nightingale sang sweet without a
fault,

My gentle leopards innocently
bounded;

We were obedient—what is this con-
vulses

Our blameless life with pangs and
fever-pulses?—

And I wail!

Eve. I choose God's thunder and
His angels' swords

To die by, Adam, rather than such
words.

Let us pass out, and flee.

Adam. We cannot flee.

This zodiac of the creatures' cruelty
Curls round us, like a river cold and

drear,

And shuts us in, constraining us to
hear.

First Spirit.

I feel your steps, O wandering sinners,
strike

A sense of death to me, and undug
graves!

The heart of earth, once calm, is trem-
bling like

The ragged foam along the ocean-
waves:

The restless earthquakes rock against
each other;—

The elements moan 'round me—
"Mother, mother"—

And I wail!

Second Spirit.

Your melancholy looks do pierce me
through;

Corruption swathes the paleness
of your beauty.

Why have ye done this thing? What
did we do

That we should fall from bliss as
ye from duty?

Wild shriek the hawks, in waiting
for their jesses,

Fierce howl the wolves along the
wildernesses—

And I wail!

Adam. To thee, the Spirit of the
harmless earth—

To thee, the Spirit of earth's harmless lives—

Inferior creatures but still innocent—
Be salutation from a guilty mouth
Yet worthy of some audience and respect

From you who are not guilty. If we have sinned,
God hath rebuked us, Who is over us,
To give rebuke or death, and if ye wail

Because of any suffering from our sin,
Ye who are under and not over us,
Be satisfied with God, if not with us,
And pass out from our presence in such peace

As we have left you, to enjoy revenge
Such as the Heavens have made you.

Verily,
There must be strife between us, large as sin.

Eve. No strife, mine Adam ! Let us not stand high
Upon the wrong we did to reach disdain,

Who rather should be humbler evermore,

Since self-made sadder. Adam ! shall I speak—

I who spake once to such a bitter end—
Shall I speak humbly now, who once was proud ?

I, schooled by sin to more humility
Than thou hast, O mine Adam, O my king—

My king, if not the world's ?

Adam. Speak as thou wilt.

Eve. Thus, then—my hand in thine—

... Sweet, dreadful Spirits !
I pray you humbly in the name of God,
Not to say of these tears, which are impure—

Grant me such pardoning grace as can go forth

From clean volitions toward a spotted will,

From the wronged to the wronger, this and no more ;

I do not ask more. I am 'ware, indeed,

That absolute pardon is impossible
From you to me, by reason of my sin,—

And that I cannot evermore, as once,
With worthy acceptation of pure joy,

Behold the trances of the holy hills
Beneath the leaning stars, or watch the vales

Dew-pallid with their morning ecstasy,—

Or hear the winds make pastoral peace between

Two grassy uplands,—and the river-wells

Work out their bubbling lengths beneath the ground,—

And all the birds sing, till for joy of song,

They lift their trembling wings as if to heave

The too-much weight of music from their heart

And float it up the aether ! I am 'ware

That these things I can no more apprehend

With a pure organ into a full delight,—
The sense of beauty and of melody

Being no more aided in me by the sense

Of personal adjustment to those heights

Of what I see well-formed or hear well-tuned,

But rather coupled darkly and made ashamed

By my perciency of sin and fall,
And melancholy of humilient thoughts.

But, oh ! fair, dreadful Spirits—albeit this

Your accusation must confront my soul,

And your pathetic utterance and full gaze

Must evermore subdue me, be content—

Conquer me gently—as if pitying me,
Not to say loving ! let my tears fall thick

As watering dews of Eden, unapproached ;

And when your tongues reprove me, make me smooth,

Not ruffled—smooth and still with your reproof,

And peradventure better, while more sad.

For look to it, sweet Spirits—look well to it—

It will not be amiss in you who kept

The law of your own righteousness,
and keep
The right of your own griefs to mourn
themselves,—

To pity me twice fallen,—from that,
and this,—

From joy of place, and also right of
wail,—

“I wail” being not for me—only “I
sin.”

Look to it, O sweet Spirits!—

For was I not,
At that last sunset seen in Paradise,
When all the westering clouds flashed
out in throngs

Of sudden angel-faces, face by face,
All hushed and solemn, as a thought
of God

Held them suspended,—was I not,
that hour,

The lady of the world, princess of life,
Mistress of feast and favour? Could
I touch

A rose with my white hand, but it
became

Redder at once? Could I walk
leisurely

Along our swarded garden, but the
grass

Tracked me with greenness? Could
I stand aside

A moment underneath a cornel-tree,
But all the leaves did tremble as alive
With songs of fifty birds who were
made glad

Because I stood there? Could I
turn to look

With these twain eyes of mine, now
weeping fast,

Now good for only weeping,—upon
man,

Angel, or beast, or bird, but each re-
joiced

Because I looked on him? Alas, alas!
And is not this much woe, to cry
“alas!”

Speaking of joy? And is not this
more shame,

To have made the woe myself, from
all that joy?

To have stretched mine hand, and
plucked it from the tree,

And chosen it for fruit? Nay, is not
this

Still most despair,—to have halved
that bitter fruit,

And ruined, so, the sweetest friend I
have,

Turning the GREATEST to mine
enemy?

Adam. I will not hear thee speak:
so. Harken, Spirits!

Our God, Who is the enemy of none
But only of their sin,—hath set your
hope

And my hope, in a promise, on this
Head.

Show reverence, then,—and never
bruise her more

With unpermitted and extreme
reproach,—

Lest, passionate in anguish, she fling
down

Beneath your trampling feet, God's
gift to us

Of sovereignty by reason and freewill.
Sinning against the province of the
Soul

To rule the soulless. Reverence her
estate

And pass out from her presence with
no words.

Eve. O dearest Heart, have
patience with my heart!

O Spirits, have patience, 'stead of
reverence,—

And let me speak; for, not being
innocent,

It little doth become me to be proud;
And I am prescient by the very hope

And promise set upon me, that hence-
forth

Only my gentleness shall make me
great,

My humbleness exalt me. Awful
Spirits,

Be witness that I stand in your
reproof

But one sun's length off from my
happiness—

Happy, as I have said, to look
around—

Clear to look up!—And now! I need
not speak—

Ye see me what I am; ye scorn me
so,—

Because ye see me what I have made
myself

From God's best making! Alas,—
peace foregone,—

Love wronged, and virtue forfeit,
and tears wept

Upon all, vainly ! Alas, me ! alas,
 Who have undone myself from all
 that best
 Fairest and sweetest, to this wretch-
 edest
 Saddest and most defiled—cast out,
 cast down—
 What word metes absolute loss ? let
 absolute loss
 Suffice you for revenge. For *I*, who
 lived
 Beneath the wings of angels yesterday,
 Wander to-day beneath the roofless
 world !
I, reigning the earth's empress
 yesterday,
 Put off from me, to-day, your hate
 with prayers !
I, yesterday, who answered the Lord
 God,
 Composed and glad as singing-birds
 the sun,
 Might shriek now from our dismal
 desert, "God,"
 And hear Him make reply, "What is
 thy need,
 Thou whom I cursed to-day ?"
Adam. *Eve !*
Eve. *I*, at last,
 Who yesterday was helpmate and
 delight
 Unto mine Adam, am to-day the grief
 And curse-mete for him ! And, so,
 pity us,
 Ye gentle Spirits, and pardon him
 and me,
 And let some tender peace, made of
 our pain,
 Grow up betwixt us, as a tree might
 grow,
 With boughs on both sides. In the
 shade of which,
 When presently ye shall behold us
 dead,—
 For the poor sake of our humility,
 Breathe out your pardon on our
 breathless lips,
 And drop your twilight dews against
 our brows,
 And stroking with mild airs our
 harmless hands
 Left empty of all fruit, perceive your
 love
 Distilling through your pity over us,
 And suffer it, self-reconciled, to pass.

LUCIFER rises in the circle.

Luc. Who talks here of a comple-
 ment of grief ?
 Of expiation wrought by loss and
 fall ?
 Of hate subduable to pity ? Eve ?
 Take counsel from thy counsellor
 the snake,
 And boast no more in grief, nor hope
 from pain,
 My docile Eve ! I teach you to
 despond,
 Who taught you disobedience. Look
 around ;—
 Earth-spirits and phantasms hear
 you talk, unmoved
 As if ye were red clay again and
 talked !
 What are your words to them ? your
 griefs to them ?
 Your deaths, indeed, to them ? Did
 the hand pause
 For *their* sake, in the plucking of the
 fruit,
 That they should pause for *you*, in
 hating you ?
 Or will your grief or death, as did
 your sin,
 Bring change upon their final doom ?
 Behold,
 Your grief is but your sin in the
 rebound,
 And cannot expiate for it.
Adam. That is true.
Luc. Ay, that is true. The clay-
 king testifies
 To the snake's counsel,—hear him !—
 very true.
Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail !
Luc. And certes, *that* is true.
 Ye wail, ye all wail. Peradventure I
 Could wail among you. O thou
 universe,
 That holdest sin and woe,—more
 room for wail !
Distant starry voice. Ah, ah, Heos-
 phoros ! Heosphoros !
Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail !
Adam. Mark Lucifer. He chan-
 ges awfully.
Eve. It seems as if he looked from
 grief to God,
 And could not see Him !—wretched
 Lucifer !
Adam. How he stands—yet an
 angel !
Earth Spirits. I wail—wail !

Luc. (after a pause). Dost thou remember, Adam, when the curse Took us in Eden? On a mountain-peak
 Half-sheathed in primal woods and glittering
 In spasms of awful sunshine, at that hour
 A lion couched,—part raised upon his paws,
 With his calm, massive face turned full on thine,
 And his mane listening. When the ended curse
 Left silence in the world,—right suddenly
 He sprang up rampant and stood straight and stiff,
 As if the new reality of death Were dashed against his eyes,—and roared so fierce
 (Such thick carnivorous passion in his throat
 Tearing a passage through the wrath and fear)—
 And roared so wild, and smote from all the hills
 Such fast, keen echoes crumbling down the vales
 Precipitately,—that the forest beasts, One after one, did mutter a response
 In savage and in sorrowful complaint Which trailed along the gorges.
 Then, at once,
 He fell back, and rolled crashing from the height,
 Into the dusk of pines.
Adam. It might have been.
 I heard the curse alone.
Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!
Luc. That lion is the type of what I am!
 And as he fixed thee with his full-faced hate,
 And roared, O Adam, comprehending doom,
 So, gazing on the face of the Unseen,
 I cry out here between the Heavens and earth
 My conscience of this sin, this woe, this wrath,
 Which damn me to this depth.
Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!
Eve. I wail—O God!
Luc. I scorn you that ye wail,

Who use your petty griefs for pedestals
 To stand on, beckoning pity from without,
 And deal in pathos of antithesis
 Of what ye *were* forsooth, and what ye are;—
 I scorn you like an angel! Yet, one cry
 I, too, would drive up like a column erect,
 Marble to marble, from my heart to Heaven,
 A monument of anguish to trans-pierce
 And overtop your vapoury complaints
 Expressed from feeble woes!
Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!
Luc. For, O ye Heavens, ye are my witnesses,
 That I, struck out from nature in a blot,
 The outcast and the mildew of things good,
 The leper of angels, the excepted dust
 Under the common rain of daily gifts,—
 I the snake, I the tempter, I the cursed,—
 To whom the highest and the lowest alike
 Say, "Go from us—we have no need of thee,"—
 Was made by God like others. Good and fair,
 He did create me!—ask Him, if not fair!
 Ask, if I caught not fair and silverly
 His blessing for chief angels on my head
 Until it grew there, a crown crystal-lized!
 Ask, if He never called me by my name,
Lucifer—kindly said as "Gabriel"—
Lucifer—soft as "Michael!" while serene
 I, standing in the glory of the lamps,
 Answered "my Father," innocent of shame
 And of the sense of thunder. Ha! ye think,
 White angels in your niches,—I repent,—
 And would tread down my own offences, back

To service at the footstool? *That's*
 read wrong!
 I cry as the beast did, that I may cry—
 Expansive, not appealing! Fallen
 so deep
 Against the sides of this prodigious
 pit,
 I cry—cry—dashing out the hands of
 wail,
 On each side, to meet anguish every-
 where,
 And to attest it in the ecstasy
 And exaltation of a woe sustained
 Because provoked and chosen.
 Pass along
 Your wilderness, vain mortals!
 Puny griefs
 In transitory shapes, be henceforth
 dwarfed
 To your own conscience, by the dread
 extremes
 Of what I am and have been. If ye
 have fallen,
 It is a step's fall,—the whole ground
 beneath
 Strewn woolly soft with promise! if
 ye have sinned,
 Your prayers tread high as angels!
 if ye have grieved,
 Ye are too mortal to be pitiable,
 The power to die disproves the right
 to grieve.
 Goto! ye call this ruin? I half-scorn
 The ill I did you! Were ye wronged
 by me,
 Hated and tempted, and undone of
 me,—
 Still, what's your hurt to mine of
 doing hurt,
 Of hating, tempting, and so ruining?
 This sword's *hilt* is the sharpest, and
 cuts through
 The hand that wields it.
 Go—I curse you all.
 Hate one another—feebly—as ye can;
 I would not certes cut you short in
 hate—
 Far be it from me! hate on as ye can!
 I breathe into your faces, spirits of
 earth,
 As wintry blast may breathe on wintry
 leaves,
 And lifting up their brownness show
 beneath
 The branches bare.—Beseech you,
 spirits, give

To Eve who beggarly entreats your
 love
 For her and Adam when they shall
 be dead,
 An answer rather fitting to the sin
 Than to the sorrow—as the Heavens,
 I trow,
 For justice' sake, gave theirs.
 I curse you both,
 Adam and Eve! Say grace as after
 meat,
 After my curses. May your tears fall
 hot
 On all the hissing scorn's o' the crea-
 tures here,—
 And yet rejoice. Increase and mul-
 tiply,
 Ye and your generations, in all
 plagues,
 Corruptions, melancholies, poverties,
 And hideous forms of life and fears of
 death,—
 The thought of death being alway
 eminent
 Immovable and dreadful in your
 life,
 And deafly and dumbly insignificant
 Of any hope beyond,—as death
 itself,—
 Whichever of you lieth dead the first,—
 Shall seem to the survivor—yet
 rejoice!
 My curse catch at you strongly, body
 and soul,
 And He find no redemption—nor
 the wing
 Of seraph move your way—and yet
 rejoice!
 Rejoice,—because ye have not set in
 you
 This hate which shall pursue you—
 this fire-hate
 Which glares without, because it
 burns within—
 Which kills from ashes—this poten-
 tial hate,
 Wherein I, angel, in antagonism
 To God and His reflex beatitudes,
 Moan ever in the central universe
 With the great woe of striving against
 Love—
 And gasp for space amid the Infinite—
 And toss for rest amid the Desertness—
 Self-orphaned by my will, and self-
 elect
 To kingship of resistant agony

Toward the Good 'round me—hating
good and love,
And willing to hate good and to hate
love.

And willing to will on so evermore,
Scorning the Past, and damning the
To come—

Go and rejoice! I curse you!
[LUCIFER *vanishes*.

Earth Spirits.

And we scorn you! there's no
pardon

Which can lean to you aright.
When your bodies take the
guerdon

Of the death-curse in our sight,
Then the bee that hummeth lowest
shall transcend you

Then ye shall not move an eyelid
Though the stars look down
your eyes;

And the earth which ye defiled
Shall expose you to the skies,—

"Lo! these kings of ours—who
sought to comprehend you."

First Spirit.

And the elements shall boldly
All your dust to dust constrain!
Unresistedly and coldly

I will smite you with my rain!
From the slowest of my frosts is no
receding.

Second Spirit.

And my little worm, appointed
To assume a royal part,
He shall reign, crowned and
anointed,

O'er the noble human heart!
Give him counsel against losing of
that Eden!

Adam. Do ye scorn us? Back
your scorn

Toward your faces grey and lorn,
As the wind drives back the rain,
Thus I drive with passion strife;
I who stand beneath God's sun,
Made like God, and, though
undone,

Not unmade for love and life.
Lo! ye utter threats in vain!
By my free will that chose sin,
By mine agony within
Round the passage of the fire,—
By the pinings which disclose

That my native soul is higher
Than what it chose,—
We are yet too high, O spirits, for
your disdain.

Eve. Nay, beloved! If these be
low,

We confront them with no height!
We have stooped down to their
level

By infecting them with evil;
And their scorn that meets our
blow

Scathes aright.
Amen. Let it be so.

Earth Spirits.

We shall triumph—triumph
greatly

When ye lie beneath the
sward!

There, our lily shall grow stately
Though ye answer not a word—
And her fragrance shall be scornful of
your silence;

While your throne ascending
calmly

We, in heirdom of your soul,
Flash the river, lift the palm-tree,
The dilated ocean roll

With the thoughts that throbbed
within you—round the islands.

Alp and torrent shall inherit
Your significance of will;
With the grandeur of your
spirit,

Shall our broad savannahs
fill:

In our winds, your exultations shall
be springing!

Even your parlance which in-
veigles,

By our rudeness shall be won;
Hearts poetic in our eagles

Shall beat up against the sun
And pour downward in articulate
clear singing.

Your bold speeches, our Behe-
moth

With his thunderous jaw shall
wield!

Your high fancies, shall our
Mammoth

Breathe sublimely up the
shield

Of St. Michael, at God's throne, who
waits to speed him!

Till the heaven's smooth-
grooved thunder

Spinning back, shall leave them
clear,

And the angels smiling wonder
With dropt looks from sphere
to sphere,

Shall cry, "Ho, ye heirs of Adam!
ye exceed him!"

Adam. Root out thine eyes, sweet,
from the dreary ground.

Beloved, we may be overcome by God,
But not by these.

Eve. By God, perhaps, in these.

Adam. I think, not so. Had God
foredoomed despair,

He had not spoken hope. He may
destroy,

Certes, but not deceive.

Eve. Behold this rose!

I plucked it in our bower of Paradise
This morning as I went forth, and
my heart

Has beat against its petals all the
day.

I thought it would be always red and
full

As when I plucked it—*Is it?*—ye
may see!

I cast it down to you that ye may see.
All of you!—count the petals lost of
it—

And note the colours faded! ye
may see!

And I am as it is, who yesterday
Grew in the same place. O ye
Spirits of earth!

I almost, from my miserable heart,
Could here upbraid you for your
cruel heart,

Which will not let me, down the
slope of death,

Draw any of your pity after me,
Or lie still in the quiet of your looks,
As my flower, there, in mine.

[A bleak wind, quickened with indistinct
human voices, spins around the earth-
zodiac, filling the circle with its
presence, and then wailing off into
the east, carries the rose away with
it. EVE falls upon her face. ADAM
stands erect.

Adam.

The last departs.

So, verily,

Eve. So Memory follows Hope,
And Life both. Love said to me,
"Do not die,"

And I replied, "O Love, I will not die.
I exiled and I will not orphan Love."
But now it is no choice of mine to die—
My heart throbs from me.

Adam. Call it straightway back.
Death's consummation crowns com-
pleted life,

Or comes too early. Hope being set
on thee

For others, if for others, then for
thee,—

For thee and me.

[The wind revolves from the east, and
round again to the east, perfumed
by the Eden-rose, and full of voices
which sweep out into articulation as
they pass.

Let thy soul shake its leaves,
To feel the mystic wind—Hark!

Eve. I hear life.

Infant voices passing in the wind.

O we live, O we live—

And this life we receive,

Is a warm thing and a new,

Which we softly bud into

From the heart and from the
brain,—

Something strange that overmuch
is

Of the sound and of the sight,
Flowing round in trickling
touches,

With a sorrow and delight,—
Yet is it all in vain?

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Youthful voices passing.

O we live, O we live—

And this life that we achieve

Is a loud thing and a bold,

Which with pulses manifold

Strikes the heart out full and
fain—

Active doer, noble liver,

Strong to struggle, sure to con-
quer,—

Though the vessel's prow will
quiver

At the lifting of the anchor:

Yet do we strive in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain.

Poet voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we conceive
Is a clear thing and a fair,
Which we set in crystal air
That its beauty may be plain :
With a breathing and a flooding
Of the heaven-life on the whole,
While we hear the forests budding
To the music of the soul—
Yet is it tuned in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Philosophic voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we perceive,
Is a great thing and a grave,
Which for others' use we have,
Duty-laden to remain.
We are helpers, fellow-creatures,
Of the right against the
wrong,—

We are earnest-hearted teachers,
Of the truth which maketh
strong—

Yet do we teach in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Revel voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we reprove,
Is a low thing and a light,
Which is jested out of sight,
And made worthy of disdain !
Strike with bold electric laughter
The high tops of things divine—

Turn thy head, my brother, after,
Lest thy tears fall in my
wine ;—

For is all laughed in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Eve. I hear a sound of life—of life
like ours—

Of laughter and of wailing,—of grave
speech,

Of little plaintive voices innocent,—
Of life in separate courses flowing out
Like our four rivers to some outward
main.

I hear life—life !

Adam. And, so, thy cheeks have
snatched

Scarlet to paleness, and thine eyes
drink fast

Of glory from full cups, and thy
moist lips

Seem trembling, both of them, with
earnest doubts

Whether to utter words or only
smile.

Eve. Shall I be mother of the
coming life ?

Hear the steep generations, how
they fall

Adown the visionary stairs of Time,
Like supernatural thunders—far, yet
near,—

Sowing the fiery echoes through the
hills.

Am I a cloud to these—mother to
these ?

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the
curse upon all these.

[*Eve sinks down again.*]

Poet voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we conceive,
Is a noble thing and high,
Which we climb up loftily
To view God without a stain ;
Till, recoiling where the shade is,

We retread our steps again,
And descend to gloomy Hades

To resume man's mortal pain.
Shall it be climbed in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Love voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life we would retrieve,
Is a faithful thing apart
Which we love in, heart to heart,
Until one heart fitteth twain.

"Wilt thou be one with me ?"

"I will be one with thee !"

"Ha, ha !—we love and live !"

Alas ! ye love and die !

Shriek—who shall reply ?

For is it not loved in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Though it be all in vain.

Aged voices passing.

O we live, O we live—

And this life we would survive,
Is a gloomy thing and brief,
Which, consummated in grief,
Leaveth ashes for all gain—
Is it not *all* in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Though it be *all* in vain.
[*Voices die away.*]

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the
curse upon all these.

Eve. The voices of foreshown
Humanity
Die off;—so let me die.

Adam. So let us die,
When God's will soundeth the right
hour of death.

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the
curse upon all these.

Eve. O spirits! by the gentleness
ye use
In winds at night, and floating clouds
at noon,—

In gliding waters under lily-leaves,—
In chirp of crickets, and the settling
hush

A bird makes in her nest with feet
and wings,—
Fulfil your natures now!

Earth Spirits.

Agreed; allowed!
We gather out our natures like a
cloud,
And thus fulfil their lightnings!
Thus, and thus!

Hearken, O hearken to us!

First Spirit.

As the storm-wind blows bleakly in
the norland,—

As the snow-wind beats blindly on
the moorland,—

As the simoom drives wild across the
desert,—

As the thunder roars deep in the
Unmeasured,—

As the torrent tears an ocean-world
to atoms,—

As the whirlpool grinds fathoms be-
low fathoms,—

Thus,—and thus!

Second Spirit.

As the yellow toad, that spits its
poison chilly,—

As the tiger, in the jungle crouching
stilly,—

As the wild boar, with ragged tusks
of anger,—

As the wolf-dog, with teeth of glitter-
ing clangour,—

As the vultures that scream against
the thunder,—

As the owlets that sit and moan
asunder,—

Thus,—and thus!

Eve. Adam! God!

Adam. Cruel, unrelenting Spirits!
By the power in me of the sovran soul
Whose thoughts keep pace yet with
the angels' march,

I charge you into silence—trample you
Down to obedience.—I am king of
you!

Earth Spirits. Ha, ha! thou art
king!

With a sin for a crown,
And a soul undone!

Thou, the antagonised,
Tortured and agonised,

Held in the ring

Of the zodiac!

Now, king, beware!

We are many and strong

Whom thou standest among,—

And we press on the air,

And we stifle thee back,

And we multiply where

Thou wouldst trample us down

From rights of our own

To an utter wrong—

And, from under the feet of thy scorn,
O forlorn!

We shall spring up like corn,

And our stubble be strong.

Adam. God, there is power in
Thee! I make appeal

Unto Thy kingship.

Eve. There is pity in THEE,
O sinned against, great God!—My

Seed, my Seed,

There is hope set on THEE—I cry to
Thee,

Thou mystic seed that shalt be!—
leave us not

In agony beyond what we can
bear,

Fallen in debasement below thunder-
mark,

A mark for scorning—taunted and
perplexed

By all these creatures we ruled yesterday,
Whom thou, Lord, rulest alway. O
my Seed,
Through the tempestuous years that
rain so thick
Betwixt my ghostly vision and Thy
face,
Let me have token! for my soul is
bruised
Before the serpent's head.

[A vision of CHRIST appears in the midst
of the zodiac, which pales before the
heavenly light. The Earth Spirits
grow greyer and fainter.]

CHRIST. I AM HERE!

Adam. This is God!—Curse us
not, God, any more.

Eve. But gazing so—so—with
omnific eyes,

Lift my soul upward till it touch Thy
feet!

Or lift it only,—not to seem too
proud,—

To the low height of some good angel's
feet,

For such to tread on, when he walk-
eth straight

And Thy lips praise him.

CHRIST. Spirits of the earth,
I meet you with rebuke for the re-
proach

And cruel and unmitigated blame
Ye cast upon your masters. True,
they have sinned;

And true, their sin is reckoned into
loss

For you the sinless. Yet, your inno-
cence,

Which of you praises? since God
made your acts

Inherent in your lives, and bound
your hands

With instincts and imperious sancti-
ties,

From self-defacement? Which of
you disdains?

These sinners who in falling proved
their height

Above you by their liberty to fall?
And which of you complains of loss by
them,

For whose delight and use ye have
your life

And honour in creation? Ponder it!
This regent and sublime Humanity

Though fallen, exceeds you! this
shall flim your sun,
Shall hunt your lightning to its lair
of cloud,

Turn back your rivers, footpath all
your seas,

Lay flat your forests, master with a
look

Your lion at his fasting, and fetch
down

Your eagle flying. Nay, without this
law

Of mandom, ye would perish,—beast
by beast

Devouring—tree by tree, with strang-
ling roots

And trunks set tuskwise. Ye would
gaze on God

With imperceptive blankness up the
stars,

And mutter, "Why, God, hast Thou
made us thus?"

And pining to a sallow idiocy
Stagger up blindly against the ends of
life,

Then stagnate into rottenness and
drop

Heavily—poor, dead matter—piece-
meal down

The abysmal spaces—like a little stone
Let fall to chaos. Therefore over you,

Receive man's sceptre,—therefore be
content

To minister with voluntary grace
And melancholy pardon, every rite

And function in you, to the human
hand.

Be ye to man as angels be to God,
Servants in pleasure, singers of delight,

Suggesters to his soul of higher things
Than any of your highest. So at
last,

He shall look round on you with lids
too straight

To hold the grateful tears, and thank
you well,

And bless you when he prays his se-
cret prayers,

And praise you when he sings his open
songs

For the clear song-note he has learnt
in you

Of purifying sweetness, and extend
Across your head his golden fantasies

Which glorify you into soul from
sense!

Go, serve him for such price. That
not in vain

Nor yet ignobly ye shall serve, I place
My word here for an oath, mine oath
for act

To be hereafter. In the name of
which

Perfect redemption and perpetual
grace,

I bless you through the hope and
through the peace

Which are mine,—to the Love, which
is myself.

Eve. Speak on still, Christ. Al-
beit Thou bless me not

In set words, I am blessed in hearken-
ing Thee—

Speak, Christ.

CHRIST. Speak, Adam. Bless
the woman, man—

It is thine office.

Adam. Mother of the world,
Take heart before this Presence. Lo!

my voice,
Which, naming erst the creatures, did
express

(God breathing through my breath)
the attributes

And instincts of each creature in its
name,

Floats to the same afflatus,—floats
and heaves

Like a water-weed that opens to a
wave,—

A full-leaved prophecy affecting thee,
Out fairly and wide. Henceforward,

rise, aspire
To all the calms and magnanimities,

The lofty uses and the noble ends,
The sanctified devotion and full
work,

To which thou art elect for evermore,
First woman, wife, and mother.

Eve. And first in sin.

Adam. And also the sole bearer of
the Seed

Whereby sin dieth! Raise the ma-
jesties

Of thy disconsolate brows, O well-be-
loved,

And front with level-eyelids the To
come,

And all the dark o' the world. Rise,
woman, rise

To thy peculiar and best altitudes
Of doing good and of enduring ill,—

Of comforting for ill, and teaching
good,

And reconciling all that ill and good
Unto the patience of a constant
hope,—

Rise with thy daughters! If sin
came by thee,

And by sin, death,—the ransom-
righteousness

The heavenly life and compensative
rest

Shall come by means of thee. If woe
by thee

Had issue to the world, thou shalt go
forth

An angel of the woe thou didst
achieve,

Found acceptable to the world in-
stead

Of others of that name, of whose
bright steps

Thy deed stripped bare the hills. Be
satisfied;

Something thou hast to bear through
womanhood,

Peculiar suffering answering to the
sin,—

Some pang paid down for each new
human life,

Some weariness in guarding such a
life,

Some coldness from the guarded,
some mistrust

From those thou hast too well served,
from those beloved

Too loyally some treason, feebleness
Within thy heart, and cruelty with-
out,

And pressures of an alien tyranny
With its dynastic reasons of larger
bones

And stronger sinews. But, go to!
thy love

Shall chant itself its own beatitudes,
After its own life-working. A child's
kiss

Set on thy sighing lips, shall make
thee glad;

A poor man served by thee, shall
make thee rich;

A sick man helped by thee, shall
make thee strong;

Thou shalt be served thyself by every
sense

Of service which thou renderest.
Such a crown

I set upon thy head,—Christ witness-
ing

With looks of prompting love—to
keep thee clear

Of all reproach against the sin fore-
gone,

From all the generations which suc-
ceed.

Thy hand which plucked the apple,
I clasp close,—

Thy lips which spake wrong counsel,
I kiss close,—

I bless thee in the name of Paradise
And by the memory of Edenic joys

Forfeit and lost,—by that last cy-
press tree

Green at the gate, which thrilled as
we came out,

And by the blessed nightingale which
threw

Its melancholy music after us,—
And by the flowers, whose spirits full
of smells

Did follow softly, plucking us be-
hind

Back to the gradual banks and vernal
bowers

And fourfold river-courses.—By all
these,

I bless thee to the contraries of these,—
I bless thee to the desert and the
thorns,

To the elemental change and turbu-
lence,

And to the roar of the estranged
beasts,

And to the solemn dignities of grief,—
To each one of these ends,—and to
their END

Of Death and the hereafter !

Eve. I accept
For me and for my daughters this
high part

Which lowly shall be counted. Noble
work

Shall hold me in the place of garden-
rest,

And in the place of Eden's lost delight
Worthy endurance of permitted pain ;

While on my longest patience there
shall wait

Death's speechless angel, smiling in
the east

Whence cometh the cold wind. I
bow myself

Humbly henceforward on the ill I did,

That humbleness may keep it in the
shade.

Shall it be so ? Shall I smile, saying
so ?

O Seed ! O King ! O God, Who *shalt*
be Seed,—

What shall I say ? As Eden's foun-
tains swelled

Brightly betwixt their banks, so
swells my soul

Betwixt Thy love and power !
And, sweetest thoughts

Of foregone Eden ! now, for the first
time

Since God said " Adam," walking
through the trees,

I dare to pluck you, as I plucked ere-
while

The lily or pink, the rose or heliotrope,
So pluck I you—so largely—with both
hands,—

And throw you forward on the outer
earth

Wherein we are cast out, to sweeten
it.

Adam. As Thou, Christ, to illumine
it, holdest Heaven

Broadly above our heads.

[*The CHRIST is gradually transfigured
during the following phrases of dia-
logue, into humanity and suffering.*

Eve. O Saviour Christ,
Thou standest mute in glory, like the
sun.

Adam. We worship in Thy silence,
Saviour Christ.

Eve. Thy brows grow grander
with a forecast woe,—

Diviner, with the possible of Death !
We worship in Thy sorrow, Saviour
Christ.

Adam. How do Thy clear, still
eyes transpierce our souls,

As gazing *through* them toward the
Father-throne,

In a pathological, full Deity,
Serenely as the stars gaze through the
air

Straight on each other.

Eve. O pathetic Christ,
Thou standest mute in glory, like the
moon.

CHRIST. Eternity stands alway
fronting God ;

A stern colossal image, with blind eyes

And grand dim lips that murmur
evermore

"God, God, God!" while the rush of
life and death,

The roar of act and thought, of evil
and good,

The avalanches of the ruining worlds
Tolling down space,—the new worlds'
genesis

Budding in fire,—the gradual hum-
ming growth

Of the ancient atoms and first forms
of earth,

The slow procession of the swathing
seas

And firmamental waters,—and the
noise

Of the broad, fluent strata of pure
airs,—

All these flow onward in the intervals
Of that reiterant, solemn sound of—
God!

Which word, innumerable angels
straightway lift

High on celestial altitudes of song
And choral adoration, and then drop

The burden softly, shutting the last
notes

In silver wings. Howbeit in the noon
of time,

Eternity shall wax as dumb as
Death,

While a new voice beneath the spheres
shall cry,

"God! why hast Thou forsaken Me,
My God?"

And not a voice in Heaven shall an-
swer it.

[*The transfiguration is complete in sadness.*]

Adam. Thy speech is of the
Heavenlies, yet, O Christ,
Awfully human are Thy voice and
face!

Eve. My nature overcomes me
from Thine eyes.

CHRIST. In the set noon of time,
shall one from Heaven,
An angel fresh from looking upon
God,

Descend before a woman, blessing her
With perfect benediction of pure
love,

For all the world in all its elements,
For all the creatures of earth, air, and
sea,

For all men in the body and in the
soul,

Unto all ends of glory and sanctity.
Eve. O pale, pathetic Christ—I
worship Thee!

I thank Thee for that woman!

CHRIST. Then, at last,
I, wrapping round Me your humanity,
Which, being sustained, shall neither
break nor burn

Beneath the fire of Godhead, will
tread earth,

And ransom you and it, and set
strong peace

Betwixt you and its creatures. With
My pangs

I will confront your sins; and since
those sins

Have sunk to all Nature's heart
from yours,

The tears of My clean soul shall fol-
low them

And set a holy passion to work clear
Absolute consecration. In My brow
Of kingly whiteness, shall be crowned
anew

Your discrowned human nature.
Look on Me!

As I shall be uplifted on a cross
In darkness of eclipse and anguish
dread,

So shall I lift up in My pierced hands,
Not into dark, but light—not unto
death,

But life,—beyond the reach of guilt
and grief,

The whole creation. Henceforth in
My name

Take courage, O thou woman,—man,
take hope!

Your grave shall be as smooth as
Eden's sward,

Beneath the steps of your prospective
thoughts,

And, one step past it, a new Eden-
gate

Shall open on a hinge of harmony,
And let you through to mercy. Ye
shall fall

No more, within that Eden, nor pass
out

Any more from it. In which hope,
move on,

First sinners and first mourners. Live
and love,—

Doing both nobly, because lowly!

Live and work, strongly,—because
patiently !

And, for the deed of death, trust it to
God

That it be well done, unrepented of,
And not to loss. And thence, with
constant prayers

Fasten your souls so high, that constantly

The smile of your heroic cheer may
float

Above all floods of earthly agonies,
Purification being the joy of pain !

[*The vision of CHRIST vanishes. ADAM and EVE stand in an ecstasy. The earth-zodiac pales away shade by shade, as the stars, star by star, shine out in the sky ; and the following chant from the two Earth Spirits (as they sweep back into the zodiac and disappear with it) accompanies the process of change.*

Earth Spirits.

By the mighty Word thus spoken
Both for living and for dying,
We, our homage-oath once broken,
Fasten back again in sighing ;
And the creatures and the elements
renew their covenanting.

Here, forgive us all our scorning ;
Here, we promise milder duty.
And the evening and the morning
Shall re-organise in beauty

A Sabbath day in Sabbath joy, for universal chanting.

And if, still, this melancholy
May be strong to overcome us ;
If this mortal and unholy,
We still fail to cast out from
us,—

If we turn upon you, unaware, your
own dark influences ;—

If ye tremble when surrounded
By our forest pine and palm
trees,

If we cannot cure the wounded
With our gum trees and our
balm trees,

And if your souls all mournfully sit
down among your senses,—

Yet, O mortals, do not fear us,
We are gentle in our languor ;
And more good ye shall have
near us,

Than any pain or anger ;

And our God's refracted blessing, in
our blessing shall be given !

By the desert's endless vigil,
We will solemnise your passions ;
By the wheel of the black eagle

We will teach you exaltations,
When he sails against the wind, to the
white spot up in Heaven.

Ye shall find us tender nurses
To your weariness of nature ;
And our hands shall stroke the
curse's

Dreary furrows from the crea-
ture,

Till your bodies shall lie smooth in
death, and straight and slumber-
ful :

Then, a couch we will provide you,
Where no summer heats shall
dazzle,

Strewing on you and beside you
Thyme and rosemary and
basil—

And the yew tree shall grow overhead
to keep all safe and cool.

Till the Holy blood awaited
Shall be chrism around us run-
ning.

Whereby, newly consecrated,
We shall leap up in God's sun-
ning,

To join the spheric company where
purer worlds assemble ;

While, renewed by new evangels,
Soul-consummated, made glori-
ous,

Ye shall brighten past the angels,
Ye shall kneel to Christ victori-
ous,

And the rays around His feet beneath
your sobbing lips shall tremble.

[*The phantastic vision has all passed ; the earth-zodiac has broken like a belt, and is dissolved from the desert. The Earth Spirits vanish, and the stars shine out above.*

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS,

While ADAM and EVE advance into the
desert, hand in hand.

Hear our heavenly promise
Through your mortal passion !
Love, ye shall have from us,
In a pure relation !

As a fish or bird
 Swims or flies, if moving,
 We, unseen, are heard
 To live on by loving.
 Far above the glances
 Of your eager eyes,
 Listen ! we are loving !
 Listen, through man's ignorances—
 Listen, through God's mysteries—
 Listen down the heart of things,
 Ye shall hear our mystic wings
 Murmurous with loving !
 Through the opal door
 Listen evermore
 How we live by loving.

First Semichorus.

When your bodies therefore
 Reach the grave their goal,
 Softly will we care for
 Each enfranchised soul !
 Softly and unlothly,
 Through the door of opal
 Toward the Heavenly people,
 Floated on a minor fine
 Into the full chant divine,
 We will draw you smoothly,—
 While the human in the minor
 Makes the harmony diviner !
 Listen to our loving !

Second Semichorus.

There, a sough of glory
 Shall breathe on you as you come,
 Ruffling round the doorway
 All the light of angeldom !
 From the empyrean centre
 Heavenly voices shall repeat,
 " Souls redeemed and pardoned, enter,
 For the chrism on you is sweet."
 And every angel in the place
 Lowly shall bow his face,
 Folded fair on softened sounds,
 Because upon your hands and feet
 He images his Master's wounds !
 Listen to our loving !

First Semichorus.

So, in the universe's
 Consummated undoing,
 Our seraphs of white mercies
 Shall hover round the ruin !
 Their wings shall stream upon the
 flame
 As if incorporate of the same
 In elemental fusion,
 And calm their faces shall burn out
 With a pale and mastering thought

And a steadfast looking of desire
 From out between the clefts of fire,—
 While they cry, in the Holy's name,
 To the final Restitution !
 Listen to our loving !

Second Semichorus.

So, when the day of God is
 To the thick graves accounted,
 Awaking the dead bodies
 The angel of the trumpet
 Shall split and shatter the earth
 To the roots of the grave,
 Which never before were slackened,
 And quicken the charnel birth
 With his blast so clear and brave
 Till the Dead shall start and stand
 erect,
 And every face of the burial-place
 Shall the awful, single look reflect,
 Wherewith he them awakened.
 Listen to our loving !

First Semichorus.

But wild is the horse of Death !
 He will leap up wild at the clamour
 Above and beneath ;
 And where is his Tamer
 On that last day,
 When he crieth, " Ha, ha !"
 To the trumpet's blare,
 And paweth the earth's Aceldama ?
 When he tosseth his head,
 The drear-white steed,
 And ghastly champeth the last
 moon-ray,—
 What angel there
 Can lead him away,
 That the living may rule for the Dead ?

Second Semichorus.

Yet a TAMER shall be found !
 One more bright than seraph crowned,
 And more strong than cherub bold,
 Elder, too, than angel old,
 By His grey eternities !
 He shall master and surprise
 The steed of Death,
 For He is strong, and He is fain.
 He shall quell him with a breath,
 And shall lead him where He will,
 With a whisper in the ear,
 Full of fear—
 And a hand upon the mane,
 Grand and still.

First Semichorus.

Through the flats of Hades where the
 souls assemble

He will guide the Death-steed calm
between their ranks,

While, like beaten dogs, they a little
moan and tremble

To see the darkness curdle from the
horse's glittering flanks.

Through the flats of Hades where the
dreary shade is,—

Up the steep of Heaven, will the
Tamer guide the steed,—

Up the spheric circles—circle above
circle,

We who count the ages, shall count
the tolling tread—

Every hoof-fall striking a blinder,
blanker sparkle

From the stony orbs, which shall show
as they were dead.

Second Semichorus.

All the way the Death-steed with toll-
ing hoofs shall travel,

Ashen grey the planets shall be mo-
tionless as stones,

Loosely shall the systems eject their
parts coeval,—

Stagnant in the spaces, shall float the
pallid moons ;

Suns that touch their apogees, reeling
from their level,

Shall run back on their axles, in wild,
low, broken tunes.

Chorus.

Up against the arches of the crystal
ceiling,

Shall the horse's nostrils steam the
blurring breath ;

Up between the angels pale with
silent feeling,

Will the Tamer, calmly, lead the
horse of Death.

Semichorus.

Cleaving all that silence, cleaving all
that glory,

Will the Tamer lead him straightway
to the Throne ;

" Look out, O Jehovah, to this I
bring before Thee

With a hand nail-pierced,—I, who
am Thy Son."

Then the Eye Divinest, from the
Deepest, flaming,

On the mystic courser, shall look out
in fire !

Blind the beast shall stagger where
It overcame him,—

Meek as lamb at pasture—bloodless
in desire—

Down the beast shall shiver,—slain
amid the taming,—

And by Life essential, the phantasm
Death expire.

Chorus.

Listen, man, through life and death,
Through the dust and through the
breath,

Listen down the heart of things !

Ye shall hear our mystic wings

Murmurous with loving !

A Voice. Gabriel, th' u Gabriel !

Another Voice. What wouldst
thou with me ?

First Voice. I heard thy voice
sound in the angels' song,

And I would give thee question.

Second Voice. Question me.

First Voice. Why have I called
thrice to my Morning Star

And had no answer ? All the stars
are out,

And answer in their places. Only in
vain

I cast my voice against the outer rays
Of my Star, shut in light behind the
sun !

No more reply than from a breaking
string,

Breaking when touched. Or is she
not my star ?

Where is my Star—my Star ? Have
ye cast down

Her glory like my glory ? Has she
waxed

Mortal, like Adam ? Has she learnt
to hate

Like any angel ?

Second Voice. She is sad for thee.
All things grow sadder to thee, one by

one,

Angel Chorus.

Live, work on, O Earthy !

By the Actual's tension

Speed the arrow worthy

Of a pure ascension.

From the low earth round you,

Reach the heights above you ;

From the stripes that wound you,

Seek the loves that love you !

God's divinest burneth plain

Through the crystal diaphane

Of our loves that love you !

First Voice. Gabriel, O Gabriel !

Second Voice. What wouldst thou
with me ?

First Voice. Is it true, O thou
Gabriel, that the crown
Of sorrow which I claimed, another
claims ?

That HE claims THAT too ?

Second Voice. Lost one, it is true.

First Voice. That HE will be an
exile from His Heaven,
To lead those exiles homeward ?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. That HE will be an
exile by His will,
As I by mine election ?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. That I shall stand
sole exile finally,—

Made desolate for fruition ?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. Gabriel !

Second Voice. I hearken.

First Voice. Is it true besides—
Aright true—that mine orient Star
will give

Her name of "Bright and Morning
Star" to HIM,—

And take the fairness of His virtue
back,

To cover loss and sadness ?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. Untrue, Untrue !
O Morning-Star ! O MINE !

Who sittest secret in a veil of light
Far up the starry spaces, say—*Un-
true !*

Speak but so loud as doth a wasted
moon

To Tyrrhene waters ! I am Lucifer—

[*A pause. Silence in the stars.*

All things grow sadder to me, one by
one.

Angel Chorus.

Exiled human creatures.

Let your hope grow larger !

Larger grows the vision

Of the new delight.

From this chain of Nature's

God is the Discharger,

And the Actual's prison

Opens to your sight.

Semichorus.

Calm the stars and golden

In a light exceeding :

What their rays have measured,

Let your hearts fulfil !

These are stars beholden

By your eyes in Eden ;

Yet, across the desert,

See them shining still.

Chorus.

Future joy and far light

Working such relations,—

Hear us singing gently—

Exiled is not lost !

God, above the starlight,

God, above the patience,

Shall at last present ye

Guerdons worth the cost.

Patiently enduring,

Painfully surrounded,

Listen how we love you—

Hope the uttermost—

Waiting for that curing

Which exalts the wounded,

Hear us sing above you—

EXILED, BUT NOT LOST !

[*The stars shine on brightly, while ADAM
and EVE pursue their way into the
far wilderness. There is a sound
through the silence, as of the falling
tears of an angel.*

SONNETS

(1844)

THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION

With stammering lips and insuffi-
cient sound,

I strive and struggle to deliver right

That music of my nature, day and
night

With dream and thought and feeling,
interwound,

And inly answering all the senses
round

With octaves of a mystic depth and
height,

Which step out grandly to the infinite
From the dark edges of the sensual
ground !

This song of soul I struggle to out-
bear

Through portals of the sense, sublime
and whole,

And utter all myself into the air :

But if I did it,—as the thunder-roll

Breaks its own cloud,—my flesh
would perish there,

Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

THE SERAPH AND POET

THE seraph sings before the manifest
 God-one, and in the burning of the
 Seven,
 And with the full life of consummate
 Heaven
 Hearing beneath him like a mother's
 breast
 Warm with her first-born's slumber
 in that nest !
 The poet sings upon the earth grave-
 riven,—
 Before the naughty world soon self-
 forgiven
 For wronging him,—and in the dark-
 ness prest
 From his own soul by worldly weights.
 Even so,
 Sing, seraph with the glory ! Heaven
 is high.
 Sing, poet with the sorrow ! Earth is
 low.
 The universe's inward voices cry
 "Amen" to either song of joy and
 woe—
 Sing, seraph,—poet,—sing on equally.

ON A PORTRAIT OF WORDS-
 WORTH BY B. R. HAYDON

WORDSWORTH upon Helvellyn ! Let
 the cloud
 Ebb audibly along the mountain-
 wind,
 Then break against the rock, and
 show behind
 The lowland valleys floating up to
 crowd
 The sense with beauty. *He*, with
 forehead bowed
 And humble-lidded eyes, as one in-
 clined
 Before the sovran thought of his own
 mind,
 And very meek with inspirations
 proud,—
 Takes here his rightful place as poet-
 priest
 By the high-altar, singing prayer and
 prayer
 To the higher Heavens. A noble
 vision free,
 Our Haydon's hand hath flung out
 from the mist !
 No portrait this, with Academic air—
 This is the poet and his poetry.

PAST AND FUTURE

My future will not copy fair my past
 On any leaf but Heaven's. Be fully
 done,
 Supernal Will ! I would not fain be
 one
 Who, satisfying thirst and breaking
 fast
 Upon the fulness of the heart, at last
 Says no grace after meat. My wine
 has run
 Indeed out of my cup, and there is
 none
 To gather up the bread of my repast
 Scattered and trampled ;—yet I find
 some good
 In earth's green herbs, and streams
 that bubble up
 Clear from the darkling ground,—
 content until
 I sit with angels before better food.
 Dear Christ ! when Thy new vintage
 fills my cup,
 This hand shall shake no more, nor
 that wine spill.

IRREPARABLENESS

I HAVE been in the meadows all the
 day
 And gathered there the nosegay that
 you see,
 Singing within myself as bird or bee
 When such do field-work on a morn of
 May.
 But now I look upon my flowers,—
 decay
 Has met them in my hands more
 fatally,
 Because more warmly clasped,—and
 sobs are free
 To come instead of songs. What do
 you say,
 Sweet counsellors, dear friends ? that
 I should go
 Back straightway to the fields, and
 gather more ?
 Another, sooth, may do it,—but not
 I !
 My heart is very tired—my strength
 is low—
 My hands are full of blossoms plucked
 before,
 Held dead within them till myself
 shall die,

TEARS

THANK God, bless God, all ye who
 suffer not
 More grief than ye can weep for.
 That is well—
 That is light grieving! lighter, none
 befell,
 Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.
 Tears! what are tears? The babe
 weeps in its cot,
 The mother singing,—at her marriage-
 bell,
 The bride weeps,—and before the
 oracle
 Of high-faned hills, the poet has for-
 got
 That moisture on his cheeks. Thank
 God for grace,
 Ye who weep only! Though, as some
 have done,
 Ye grope tear-blinded, in a desert
 place,
 And touch but tombs,—look up!
 Those tears will run
 Soon, in long rivers, down the lifted
 face,
 And leave the vision clear for stars
 and sun.

GRIEF

I TELL you, hopeless grief is passion-
 less—
 That only men incredulous of despair,
 Half-taught in anguish, through the
 midnight air
 Beat upward to God's throne in loud
 access
 Of shrieking and reproach. Full
 desertness
 In souls, as countries, lieth silent-
 bare
 Under the blanching, vertical eye-
 glare
 Of the absolute Heavens. Deep-
 hearted man! express
 Grief for thy Dead in silence like to
 death,—
 Most like a monumental statue set
 In everlasting watch and moveless
 woe,
 Till itself crumble to the dust
 beneath.
 Touch it: the marble eyelids are not
 wet—
 If it could weep, it could arise and go.

SUBSTITUTION

WHEN some beloved voice, that was
 to you
 Both sound and sweetness, faileth
 suddenly,
 And silence against which you dare
 not cry,
 Aches round you like a strong disease
 and new—
 What hope? what help? what music
 will undo
 That silence to your sense? Not
 friendship's sigh—
 Not reason's subtle count. Not
 melody
 Of viols, nor of pipes that Faunus
 blew—
 Not songs of poets, nor of nightin-
 gales,
 Whose hearts leap upward through
 the cypress trees
 To the clear moon! nor yet the spheric
 laws
 Self-chanted,—nor the angels' sweet
 "All hails,"
 Met in the smile of God. Nay, none
 of these.
 Speak Thou, availing Christ!—and
 fill this pause.

COMFORT

SPEAK low to me, my Saviour, low
 and sweet
 From out the hallelujahs, sweet and
 low,
 Lest I should fear and fall, and miss
 Thee so
 Who art not missed by any that en-
 treat.
 Speak to me as to Mary at Thy feet—
 And if no precious gums my hands
 bestow,
 Let my tears drop like amber, while I
 go
 In reach of Thy divinest voice com-
 plete
 In humanest affection—thus, in sooth,
 To lose the sense of losing! As a
 child,
 Whose song-bird seeks the wood for
 evermore,
 Is sung to in its stead by mother's
 mouth,—
 Till, sinking on her breast, love-
 reconciled,

He sleeps the faster that he wept before.

PERPLEXED MUSIC

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO E. J. EXPERIENCE, like a pale musician, holds
A dulcimer of patience in his hand ;
Whence harmonies we cannot understand
Of God's will in His worlds, the strain unfolds
In sad, perplexed minors. Deathly colds
Fall on us while we hear and countermand
Our sanguine heart back from the fancy-land,
With nightingales in visionary wolds.
We murmur,—“ Where is any certain tune
Or measured music, in such notes as these ? ”—
But angels, leaning from the golden seat,
Are not so minded ! their fine ear hath won
The issue of completed cadences,—
And, smiling down the stars, they whisper—SWEET.

WORK

WHAT are we set on earth for ? Say, to toil—
Nor seek to leave thy tending of the vines,
For all the heat o' the day, till it declines,
And Death's mild curfew shall from work assoil.
God did anoint thee with His odorous oil,
To wrestle, not to reign ; and He assigns
All thy tears over, like pure crystal-lines,
For younger fellow-workers of the soil
To wear for amulets. So others shall
Take patience, labour, to their heart and hand,
From thy hand, and thy heart, and thy brave cheer,
And God's grace fructify through thee to all.

The least flower, with a brimming cup, may stand,
And share its dew-drop with another near.

FUTURITY

AND, O beloved voices, upon which
Ours passionately call, because ere-long
Ye brake off in the middle of that song
We sang together softly, to enrich
The poor world with the sense of love, and witch
The heart out of things evil,—I am strong,
Knowing ye are not lost for aye among
The hills, with last year's thrush. God keeps a niche
In Heaven, to hold our idols : and albeit
He brake them to our faces, and denied
That our close kisses should impair their white,—
I know we shall behold them raised, complete,—
The dust swept from their beauty,—glorified
New Memnons singing in the great God-light.

THE TWO SAYINGS

Two sayings of the Holy Scriptures beat
Like pulses in the church's brow and breast !
And by them, we find rest in our unrest,
And heart-deep in salt tears, do you entreat
God's fellowship, as if on Heavenly seat.
The first is JESUS WEPT,—whereon is prest
Full many a sobbing face that drops its best
And sweetest waters on the record sweet.
And one is, where the Christ denied and scorned
LOOKED UPON PETER. Oh, to render plain,
By help of having loved a little and mourned,—

That look of sovran love and sovran
pain,
Which HE Who could not sin yet
suffered, turned
On him who could reject but not sus-
tain !

THE LOOK

THE Saviour looked on Peter. Ay,
no word—
No gesture of reproach ! The Heavens
serene,
Though heavy with armed justice,
did not lean
Their thunders that way. The for-
saken Lord
Looked only, on the traitor. None
record
What that look was ; none guess !
even those who have seen
Wronged lovers loving through a
death-pang keen.
Or pale-cheeked martyrs smiling to a
sword,
Have missed Jehovah at the judg-
ment-call.
And Peter, from the height of blas-
phemy—
“ I never knew this man ”—did quail
and fall,
As knowing straight THAT GOD,—and
turned free
And went out speechless from the face
of all,
And filled the silence, weeping bit-
terly.

THE MEANING OF THE LOOK

I THINK that look of Christ might seem
to say—
“ Thou Peter ! art thou then a com-
mon stone
Which I at last must break My heart
upon,
For all God's charge to His high
angels may
Guard My foot better ? Did I yes-
terday
Wash *thy* feet, My beloved, that they
should run
Quick to deny Me 'neath the morning
sun ?—
And do thy kisses, like the rest, be-
tray ?—
The cock crows coldly.—Go, and
manifest

A late contrition, but no bootless fear !
For when thy final need is dreari-
est,
Thou shalt not be denied, as I am
here—
My voice, to God and angels, shall
attest,—
*Because I KNOW this man, let him be
clear.”*

A THOUGHT FOR A LONELY DEATH-BED

INSCRIBED TO MY FRIEND E. C.

IF God compel thee to this destiny,
To die alone,—with none beside thy
bed
To ruffle round with sobs thy last
word said,
And mark with tears the pulses ebb
from thee,—
Then pray alone—“ O Christ, come
tenderly !
By Thy forsaken Sonship in the red
Drear wine-press,—by the wilder-
ness outspread,—
And the lone garden where Thine
agony
Fell bloody from Thy brow,—by all of
those
Permitted desolations, comfort mine !
No earthly friend being near me, in-
terpose
No deathly angel 'twixt my face and
Thine,
But stoop Thyself to gather my life's
rose,
And smile away my mortal to
Divine.”

WORK AND CONTEMPLATION

THE woman singeth at her spinning-
wheel
A pleasant chant, ballad, or barcarole.
She thinketh of her song, upon the
whole,
Far more than of her flax ; and yet
the reel
Is full, and artfully her fingers feel
With quick adjustment, provident
control,
The lines too subtly twisted to un-
roll,
Out to a perfect thread. I hence
appeal

To the dear Christian church—that
we may do
Our Father's business in these tem-
ples mirk,
Thus, swift and steadfast,—thus, in-
tent and strong ;
While, thus, apart from toil, our souls
pursue
Some high, calm, spheric tune, and
prove our work
The better for the sweetness of our
song.

PAIN IN PLEASURE

A THOUGHT lay like a flower upon
mine heart,
And drew around it other thoughts
like bees
For multitude and thirst of sweet-
nesses,—
Whereat rejoicing, I desired the art
Of the Greek whistler, who to wharf
and mart
Could lure those insect swarms from
orange-trees,
That I might hive with me such
thoughts, and please
My soul so, always. Foolish counter-
part
Of a weak man's vain wishes ! While
I spoke,
The thought I called a flower, grew
nettle-rough—
The thoughts, called bees, stung me to
festering.
“Oh, entertain” (cried Reason, as she
woke,)
“Your best and gladdest thoughts
but long enough,
And they will all prove sad enough to
sting.”

AN APPREHENSION

If all the gentlest-hearted friends I
know
Concentrated in one heart their gen-
tleness,
That still grew gentler, till its pulse
was less
For life than pity,—I should yet be
slow
To bring my own heart nakedly below
The palm of such a friend, that he
should press
Motive, condition, means, appliances,
My false ideal joy and fickle woe,

Out full to light and knowledge. I
should fear
Some plait between the brows—
some rougher chime
In the free voice . . . O angels, let
your flood
Of bitter scorn dash on me ! Do ye
hear
What I say, who bear calmly all the
time
This everlasting face-to-face with
God ?

DISCONTENT

LIGHT human nature is too lightly tost
And ruffled without cause,—com-
plaining on—
Restless with rest—until, being
overthrown,
It learneth to lie quiet. Let a frost
Or a small wasp have crept to the
innermost
Of our ripe peach, or let the wilful
sun
Shine westward of our window,—
straight we run
A furlong's sigh, as if the world were
lost.
But what time through the heart and
through the brain
God hath transfixed us,—we, so
moved before,
Attain to a calm. Ay, shouldering
weights of pain,
We anchor in deep waters, safe from
shore ;
And hear, submissive, o'er the stormy
main,
God's chartered judgments walk for
evermore.

PATIENCE TAUGHT BY NATURE

“O dreary life !” we cry, “O dreary
life !”
And still the generations of the birds
Sing through our sighing, and the
flocks and herds
Serenely live while we are keeping
strife
With Heaven's true purpose in us, as
a knife
Against which we may struggle.
Ocean girds
Unslackened the dry land, savan-
nah-swards

Unweary sweep, hills watch, unworn ; and rife
 Meek leaves drop yearly from the forest-trees,
 To show above, the unwasted stars that pass
 In their old glory. O thou God of old !
 Grant me some smaller grace than comes to *these*,—
 But so much patience, as a blade of grass
 Grows by contented through the heat and cold.

CHEERFULNESS TAUGHT BY REASON

I THINK we are too ready with complaint
 In this fair world of God's. Had we no hope
 Indeed beyond the zenith and the slope
 Of yon grey blank of sky, we might grow faint
 To muse upon eternity's constraint
 Round our aspirant souls. But since the scope
 Must widen early, is it well to droop,
 For a few days consumed in loss and taint ?
 O pusillanimous Heart, be comforted,—
 And, like a cheerful traveller, take the road,
 Singing beside the hedge. What if the bread
 Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod
 To meet the flints ?—At least it may be said,
 " Because the way is *short*, I thank thee, God ! "

EXAGGERATION

We overstate the ills of life, and take
 Imagination, given us to bring down
 The choirs of singing angels over-shone
 By God's clear glory,—down our earth to rake
 The dismal snows instead,—flake following flake,
 To cover all the corn. We walk upon
 The shadow of hills across a level
 thrown,

And pant like climbers. Near the alder brake
 We sigh so loud, the nightingale within
 Refuses to sing loud, as else she would.
 O brothers ! let us leave the shame and sin
 Of taking vainly, in a plaintive mood,
 The holy name of GRIEF !—holy herein,
 That, by the grief of One, came all our good.

ADEQUACY

Now, by the verdure on thy thousand hills,
 Beloved England,—doth the earth appear
 Perfect enough for men to overbear
 The will of God in, with rebellious wills !
 We cannot say the morning-sun fulfils
 Ingloriously its course, nor that the clear
 Strong stars, without significance, in-sphere
 Our habitation. We, meantime, our ills
 Heap up against this good, and lift a cry
 Against this work-day world, this ill-spread feast,
 As if ourselves were better certainly
 Than what we come to. Maker and High Priest,
 I ask Thee not my joys to multiply,—
 Only to make me worthier of the least.

TO GEORGE SAND

A DESIRE

Thou large-brained woman and large-hearted man,
 Self-called George Sand ! whose soul, amid the lions
 Of thy tumultuous senses, moans defiance,
 And answers roar for roar, as spirits can !
 I would some mild miraculous thunder ran
 Above the applauded circus, in appliance
 Of thine own nobler nature's strength and science,—
 Drawing two pinions, white as wings of swan,

From thy strong shoulders, to amaze
the place
With holier light! That thou to
woman's claim,
And man's, might'st join beside the
angel's grace
Of a pure genius sanctified from
blame,—
Till child and maiden pressed to thine
embrace,
To kiss upon thy lips a stainless fame.

TO GEORGE SAND

A RECOGNITION

TRUE genius, but true woman! dost
deny
Thy woman's nature with a manly
scorn,
And break away the gauds and arm-
lets worn
By weaker women in captivity?
Ah, vain denial! that revolted cry
Is sobbed in by a woman's voice for-
lorn!—
Thy woman's hair, my sister, all un-
shorn,
Floats back dishevelled strength in
agony,
Disproving thy man's name! and
while before
The world, thou burnest in a poet-
fire,
We see thy woman-heart beat ever-
more
Through the large flame. Beat
purer, heart, and higher,
Till God unsex thee on the heavenly
shore,
Where unincarnate spirits purely
aspire.

THE PRISONER

I COUNT the dismal time by months
and years,
Since last I felt the green sward under
foot,
And the great breath of all things
summer-mute
Met mine upon my lips. Now earth
appears
As strange to me as dreams of distant
spheres,
Or thoughts of Heaven we weep at.
Nature's lute
Sounds on behind this door so closely
shut,

A strange, wild music to the prisoner's
ears,
Dilated by the distance, till the brain
Grows dim with fancies which it feels
too fine;
While ever, with a visionary pain,
Past the precluded senses, sweep and
shine
Streams, forests, glades,—and many a
golden train
Of sunlit hills, transfigured to Divine.

INSUFFICIENCY

WHEN I attain to utter forth in verse
Some inward thought, my soul throbs
audibly
Along my pulses, yearning to be free
And something farther, fuller, higher,
rehearse,
To the individual, true, and the
universe,
In consummation of right harmony.
But, like a wind-exposed, distorted
tree,
We are blown against for ever by the
curse
Which breathes through nature. Oh,
the world is weak—
The effluence of each is false to all;
And what we best conceive, we fail to
speak.
Wait, soul, until thine ashen garments
fall!
And then resume thy broken strains,
and seek
Fit peroration, without let or thrall.

THE ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE

I

A KNIGHT of gallant deeds
And a young page at his side,
From the holy war in Palestine
Did slow and thoughtful ride,
As each were a palmer and told for
beads
The dews of the eventide.

II

"O young page," said the knight,
"A noble page art thou!
Thou fearest not to steep in blood
The curls upon thy brow;
And once in the tent, and twice in the
fight,
Didst ward me a mortal blow."

III

"O brave knight," said the page,
 "Or ere we hither came,
 We talked in tent, we talked in field,
 Of the bloody battle-game;
 But here, below this greenwood bough,
 I cannot speak the same.

IV

"Our troop is far behind,
 The woodland calm is new;
 Our steeds, with slow grass-muffled
 hoofs,
 Tread deep the shadows through;
 And in my mind, some blessing kind
 Is dropping with the dew.

V

"The woodland calm is pure—
 I cannot choose but have
 A thought, from these, o' the beechen-
 trees
 Which in our England wave;
 And of the little finches fine
 Which sang there while in Palestine
 The warrior-hilt we drave.

VI

"Methinks, a moment gone,
 I heard, my mother pray!
 I heard, sir knight, the prayer for *me*
 Wherein she passed away;
 And I know the Heavens are leaning
 down
 To hear what I shall say."

VII

The page spake calm and high,
 As of no mean degree;
 Perhaps he felt in nature's broad
 Full heart, his own was free;
 And the knight looked up to his
 lifted eye,
 Then answer'd smilingly:—

VIII

"Sir page, I pray your grace!
 Certes, I meant not so
 To cross your pastoral mood, Sir page,
 With the crook of the battle-bow;
 But a knight may speak of a lady's
 face,
 I ween, in any mood or place,
 If the grasses die or grow.

IX

"And this I meant to say,—
 My lady's face shall shine,
 As ladies' faces use, to greet
 My page from Palestine;

Or, speak she fair or prank she gay,
 She is no lady of mine.

X

"And this I meant to fear,—
 Her bower may suit thee ill!
 For, sooth, in that same field and tent,
 Thy *talk* was somewhat still;
 And fitter thy hand for my knightly
 spear,
 Than thy tongue for my lady's will."

XI

Slowly and thankfully
 The young page bowed his head:
 His large eyes seemed to muse a smile,
 Until he blushed instead,
 And no lady in her bower pardiè,
 Could blush more sudden red—
 "Sir knight,—thy lady's bower to me
 Is suited well," he said.

XII

"*Beati, beati, mortui!*"
 From the convent on the sea,—
 One mile off, or scarce as nigh,
 Swells the dirge as clear and high
 As if that, over brake and lea,
 Bodily the wind did carry
 The great altar of St. Mary,
 And the fifty tapers turning o'er it,
 And the Lady Abbess dead before
 it,
 And the chanting nuns whom yes-
 terweek
 Her voice did charge and bless—
 Chanting steady, chanting meek,
 Chanting with a solemn breath
 Because that they are thinking less
 Upon the Dead than upon death!
 "*Beati, beati, mortui!*"
 Now the vision in the sound
 Wheeleth on the wind around—
 Now it sweepeth back, away—
 The uplands will not let it stay
 To dark the western sun.
Mortui!—away at last,—
 Or ere the page's blush is past!
 And the knight heard all, and the
 page heard none.

XIII

"A boon, thou noble knight,
 If ever I served thee!
 Though thou art a knight and I am a
 page,
 Now grant a boon to me—
 And tell me sooth, if dark or bright,

If little loved or loved aright
Be the face of thy ladye."

XIV

Gloomily looked the knight ;—
"As a son thou hast served me :
And would to none I had granted
boon,
Except to only thee !
For haply then I should love aright,
For then I should know if dark or
bright
Were the face of my ladye.

XV

"Yet ill it suits my knightly tongue
To grudge that granted boon !
That heavy price from heart and life
I paid in silence down :
The hand that claimed it, cleared in
fine
My father's fame : I swear by mine,
That price was nobly won.

XVI

"Earl Walter was a brave old earl,—
He was my father's friend ;
And while I rode the lists at Court,
And little guessed the end,
My noble father in his shroud,
Against a slanderer lying loud,
He rose up to defend.

XVII

"Oh, calm, below the marble grey
My father's dust was strown !
Oh, meek, above the marble grey
His image prayed alone !
The slanderer lied—the wretch was
brave,—
For, looking up the minster-nave,
He saw my father's knightly glaive
Was changed from steel to stone.

XVIII

"But Earl Walter's glaive was steel,
With a brave old hand to wear it,
And dashed the lie back in the mouth
Which lied against the godly truth
And against the knightly merit !
The slanderer, 'neath the avenger's
heel,
Struck up the dagger in appeal
From stealthy lie to brutal force—
And out upon the traitor's corse
Was yielded the true spirit.

XIX

"I would mine hand had fought that
fight

And justified my father !
I would mine heart had caught that
wound
And slept beside him rather !
I think it were a better thing
Than murdered friend, and marriage-
ring
Forced on my life together.

XX

"Wail shook Earl Walter's house—
His true wife shed no tear—
She lay upon her bed as mute
As the earl did on his bier :
Till—'Ride, ride fast,' she said at last,
'And bring the avengèd's son
anear !
Ride fast—ride free, as a dart can
flee,
For white of blee with waiting for me
Is the corse in the next chambère.'

XXI

"I came—I knelt beside her bed—
Her calm was worse than strife—
'My husband, for thy father dear,
Gave freely when thou wert not here
His own and eke my life.
A boon ! Of that sweet child we
make
An orphan for thy father's sake,
Make thou, for ours, a wife.'

XXII

"I said, 'My steed neighs in the
court,
My bark rocks on the brine,
And the warrior's vow I am under
now
To free the pilgrim's shrine ;
But fetch the ring and fetch the
priest
And call that daughter of thine,
And rule she wide from my castle on
Nyde
While I am in Palestine.'

XXIII

"In the dark chambère, if the bride
was fair,
Ye wis, I could not see,
But the steed thrice neighed, and the
priest fast prayed,
And wedded fast were we.
Her mother smiled upon her bed
As at its side we knelt to wed,
And the bride rose from her knee

And kissed the smile of her mother
dead,
Or ever she kissed me.

XXIV

"My page, my page, what grieves thee
so,
That the tears run down thy
face?"

"Alas, alas! mine own sister
Was in thy lady's case!
But *she* laid down the silks she wore
And followed him she wed before,
Disguised as his true servitor,
To the very battle-place."

XXV

And wept the page, and laughed the
knight,—
A careless laugh laughed he:
"Well done it were for thy sister,
But not for my ladye!
My love, so please you, shall requite
No woman, whether dark or bright,
Unwomaned if she be."

XXVI

The page stopped weeping and
smiled cold—
"Your wisdom may declare
That womanhood is proved the best
By golden brooch and glossy vest
The mincing ladies wear;
Yet is it proved, and was of old,
Anear as well, I dare to hold,
By truth, or by despair."

XXVII

He smiled no more, he wept no more,
But passionate he spake,—
"Oh, womanly she prayed in tent,
When none beside did wake!
Oh, womanly she paled in fight,
For one beloved's sake!—
And her little hand defiled with blood,
Her tender tears of womanhood
Most woman-pure did make!"

XXVIII

"—Well done it were for thy sister,
Thou tellest well her tale!
But for my lady, she shall pray
I' the kirk of Nydesdale;
Not dread for me but love for me
Shall make my lady pale;
No casque shall hide her woman's
tear—
It shall have room to trickle clear
Behind her woman's veil."

XXIX

"—But what if she mistook thy mind
And followed thee to strife,
Then kneeling, did entreat thy love,
As Paynims ask for life?"
"—I would forgive, and evermore
Would love her as my servitor,
But little as my wife.

XXX

"Look up—there is a small bright
cloud
Alone amid the skies!
So high, so pure, and so apart,
A woman's honour lies."
The page looked up—the cloud was
sheen—
A sadder cloud did rush, I ween,
Betwixt it and his eyes:

XXXI

Then dimly dropped his eyes away
From welkin unto hill—
Ha! who rides there?—the page is
'ware,
Though the cry at his heart is still!
And the page seeth all and the knight
seeth none,
Though banner and spear do fleck the
sun,
And the Saracens ride at will.

XXXII

He speaketh calm, he speaketh low,—
"Ride fast, my master, ride,
Or ere within the broadening dark
The narrow shadows hide!"
"Yea, fast, my page, I will do so,
And keep thou at my side."

XXXIII

"Now nay, now nay, ride on thy way.
Thy faithful page precede!
For I must loose on saddle-bow
My battle-casque that galls, I trow.
The shoulder of my steed;
And I must pray, as I did vow,
For one in bitter need.

XXXIV

"Ere night I shall be near to thee,—
Now ride, my master, ride!
Ere night, as parted spirits cleave
To mortals too beloved to leave,
I shall be at thy side."
The knight smiled free at the fantasy.
And adown the dell did ride.

XXXV

Had the knight looked up to the
page's face,

No smile the word had won :
Had the knight looked up to the
page's face,

I ween he had never gone :
Had the knight looked back to the
page's geste,

I ween he had turned anon :
For dread was the woe in the face so
young,

And wild was the silent geste that
flung

Casque, sword to earth—as the boy
down-sprung,

And stood—alone, alone.

XXXVI

He clenched his hands as if to hold
His soul's great agony—

"Have I renounced my womanhood,
For wifehood unto thee,
And is this the last, last look of thine
That ever I shall see ?

XXXVII

"Yet God thee save, and mayst thou
have

A lady to thy mind,
More woman-proud and half as true
As one thou leav'st behind !
And God me take with Him to dwell—
For Him I cannot love too well,
As I have loved my kind."

XXXVIII

SHE looketh up in earth's despair,
The hopeful Heavens to seek :
That little cloud still floateth there,
Whereof her Loved did speak.

How bright the little cloud appears !
Her eyelids fall upon the tears,
And the tears down either cheek.

XXXIX

The tramp of hoof, the flash of steel—
The Paynims round her coming !
The sound and sight have made her
calm,—

False page, but truthful woman !
She stands amid them all unmoved :
A heart once broken by the loved
Is strong to meet the foeman.

XL

"Ho, Christian page ! art keeping
sheep,
From pouring wine-cups resting?"—

B.P.

"I keep my master's noble name,
For warring, not for feasting ;
And if that here Sir Hubert were,
My master brave, my master dear,
Ye would not stay to question."

XLI

"Where is thy master, scornful page,
That we may slay or bind him ?"—

"Now search the lea and search the
wood,

And see if ye can find him !
Nathless, as hath been often tried,
Your Paynim heroes faster ride
Before him than behind him."

XLII

"Give smother answers, lying page,
Or perish in the lying."—

"I trow that if the warrior brand
Beside my foot, were in my hand,
'Twere better at replying."
They cursed her deep, they smote her
low,

They cleft her golden ringlets
through ;

The Loving is the Dying.

XLIII

She felt the scimitar gleam down,
And met it from beneath,
With smile more bright in victory
Than any sword from sheath,—
Which flashed across her lip serene,
Most like the spirit-light between
The darks of life and death.

XLIV

"*Ingemisco, ingemisco !*"

From the convent on the sea,
Now it sweepeth solemnly !
As over wood and over lea
Bodily the wind did carry
The great altar of St. Mary,
And the fifty tapers paling o'er it,
And the Lady Abbess stark before
it,

And the weary nuns, with hearts that
faintly

Beat along their voices saintly—

"*Ingemisco, ingemisco !*"

Dirge for abbess laid in shroud,
Sweepeth o'er the shroudless Dead,
Page or lady, as we said,
With the dews upon her head,
All as sad if not as loud.

"*Ingemisco, ingemisco !*"

Is ever a lament begun

By any mourner under sun,
Which, ere it endeth, suits but *one* ?

THE LAY OF THE BROWN ROSARY

FIRST PART

"ONORA, Onora!"—her mother is
calling,

She sits at the lattice and hears the
dew falling

Drop after drop from the sycamores
laden

With dew as with blossom, and calls
home the maiden,

"Night cometh, Onora!"

She looks down the garden-walk
caverned with trees,

To the limes at the end where the
green arbour is—

"Some sweet thought or other may
keep where it found her,

While forgot or unseen in the dream-
light around her,

Night cometh, Onora!"

She looks up the forest whose alleys
shoot on

Like the mute minster-aisles, when
the anthem is done,

And the choristers sitting with faces
aslant

Feel the silence to consecrate more
than the chant—

"Onora, Onora!"

And forward she looketh across the
brown heath—

"Onora, art coming?"—What is it
she seeth?

Nought, nought, but the grey border-
stone that is wist

To dilate and assume a wild shape in
the mist—

"My daughter!"—Then over

The casement she leaneth, and as she
doth so,

She is 'ware of her little son playing
below:

"Now where is Onora?"—He hung
down his head

And spake not, then answering
blushed scarlet-red,—

"At the tryst with her lover."

But his mother was wroth. In a
sternness quoth she,

"As thou play'st at the ball, art thou
playing with me?"

When we know that her lover to
battle is gone,

And the saints know above that she
loveth but one

And will ne'er wed another?"

Then the boy wept aloud. 'Twas a
fair sight yet sad,

To see the tears run down the sweet
blossoms he had:

He stamped with his foot, said—"The
saints know I lied

Because truth that is wicked is fittest
to hide!

Must I utter it, mother?"

In his vehement childhood he hurried
within,

And knelt at her feet as in prayer
against sin;

But a child at a prayer never sobbeth
as he—

"Oh! she sits with the nun of the
brown rosary,

At nights in the ruin!

"The old convent ruin the ivy rots off,
Where the owl hoots by day, and the

toad is sun-proof;
Where no singing-birds build, and

the trees gaunt and grey
As in stormy sea-coasts appear

blasted one way—
But is *this* the wind's doing?

"A nun in the east wall was buried
alive,

Who mocked at the priest when he
called her to shrive,—

And shrieked such a curse as the stone
took her breath,

The old abbess fell backward and
swooned unto death

With an 'Ave' half-spoken.

"I tried once to pass it, myself and
my hound,

Till, as fearing the lash, down he
shivered to ground.

A brave hound, my mother! a brave
hound, ye wot!

And the wolf thought the same with
his fangs at her throat

In the pass of the Brocken.

"At dawn and at eve, mother, who sitteth there,
 With the brown rosary never used for a prayer?
 Stoop low, mother, low! If we went there to see,
 What an ugly great hole in that east wall must be
 At dawn and at even!

"Who meet there, my mother, at dawn and at even?
 Who meet by that wall, never looking to heaven?
 O sweetest my sister, what doeth with thee,
 The ghost of a nun with a brown rosary
 And a face turned from heaven?

"St. Agnes o'erwatcheth my dreams, and erewhile
 I have felt through mine eyelids the warmth of her smile—
 But last night, as a sadness like pity came o'er her.
 She whispered—'Say two prayers at dawn for Onora!
 The Tempted is sinning.'"

Onora, Onora! they heard her not coming—
 Not a step on the grass, not a voice through the gloaming!
 But her mother looked up, and she stood on the floor
 Fair and still as the moonlight that came there before,
 And a smile just beginning.

It touches her lips—but it dares not arise
 To the height of the mystical sphere of her eyes:
 And the large musing eyes, neither joyous nor sorry,
 Sing on like the angels in separate glory,
 Between clouds of amber.

For the hair droops in clouds amber-coloured, till stirred
 Into gold by the gesture that comes with a word,
 While—O soft!—her speaking is so interwound
 Of the dim and the sweet, 'tis a twilight of sound
 And floats through the chamber.

"Since thou shrivest my brother, fair mother," said she,
 "I count on thy priesthood for marrying of me.
 And I know by the hills that the battle is done—
 That my lover rides on—will be here with the sun,
 'Neath the eyes that behold thee."

Her mother sate silent—too tender, I wis,
 Of the smile her dead father smiled dying to kiss;
 But the boy started up pale with tears passion wrought,—
 "O wicked fair sister, the hills utter nought!
 If he cometh, who told thee?"

"I know by the hills," she resumed calm and clear,
 "By the beauty upon them, that he is anear.
 Did they ever look so since he bade me adieu?
 Oh, love in the waking, sweet brother, is true
 As St. Agnes in sleeping."

Half-ashamed and half-softened the boy did not speak,
 And the blush met the lashes which fell on his cheek:
 She bowed down to kiss him—Dear saints, did he see
 Or feel on her bosom the BROWN ROSARY—
 That he shrank away weeping?

SECOND PART

A bed—ONORA sleeping. ANGELS, but not near.

First Angel.

Must we stand so far, and she
 So very fair?

Second Angel.

As bodies be.

First Angel.

And she so mild?

Second Angel.

As spirits when

They meeken, not to God but men.

First Angel.

And she so young,—that I who bring
 Good dreams for saintly children,
 might

Mistake that small soft face to-
night,
And fetch her such a blessed thing
That at her waking she would weep
For childhood lost anew in sleep.
How hath she sinned ?

Second Angel.

In bartering love—
God's love—for man's.

First Angel.

We may reprove
The world for this ! not only her.
Let me approach, to breathe away
This dust o' the heart with holy
air.

Second Angel.

Stand off ! She sleeps, and did not
pray.

First Angel.

Did none pray for her ?

Second Angel.

Ay, a child,—
Who never, praying, wept before :
While, in a mother undefiled
Prayer goeth on in sleep, as true
And pauseless as the pulses do.

First Angel.

Then I approach

Second Angel.

It is not WILLED.

First Angel.

One word : Is she redeemed ?

Second Angel.

No more !

THE PLACE IS FILLED.

[Angels vanish.

*Evil Spirit in a Nun's garb by the
bed.*

Forbear that dream—forebear that
dream ! too near to Heaven it
leaned.

Onora in sleep.

Nay, leave me this—but only this !
'tis but a dream, sweet fiend !

Evil Spirit.

It is a thought.

Onora in sleep.

A sleeping thought—most innocent
of good—

It doth the Devil no harm, sweet
fiend ! it cannot, if it would.

I say in it no holy hymn, I do no
holy work,

I scarcely hear the Sabbath-bell that
chimeth from the kirk.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream—forebear that
dream !

Onora in sleep.

Nay, let me dream at least.
That far-off bell, it may be took for
viol at a feast.

I only walk among the fields, beneath
the autumn sun,

With my dead father, hand in hand,
as I have often done.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream—forebear that
dream !

Onora in sleep.

Nay, sweet fiend, let me go—
I never more can walk with him, oh,
never more but so.

For they have tied my father's feet
beneath the kirkyard stone,—

Oh, deep and straight, oh, very
straight ! they move at nights
alone :

And then he calleth through my
dreams, he calleth tenderly,—

" Come forth, my daughter, my be-
loved, and walk the fields with
me ! "

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream, or else disprove
its pureness by a sign.

Onora in sleep.

Speak on, thou shalt be satisfied ! my
word shall answer thine.

I hear a bird which used to sing when
I a child was praying,

I see the poppies in the corn I used to
sport away in.—

What shall I do—tread down the
dew, and pull the blossoms
blowing ?

Or clap my wicked hands to fright the
finches from the rowan ?

Evil Spirit.

Thou shalt do something harder
still. Stand up where thou dost
stand,

Among the fields of Dreamland with
thy father hand in hand,

And clear and slow, repeat the vow—
declare its cause and kind,

Which, not to break in sleep or wake,
thou bearest on thy mind.

Onora in sleep.

I bear a vow of wicked kind, a vow for
mournful cause ;

I vowed it deep, I vowed it strong—
the spirits laughed applause:
The spirits trailed along the pines
low laughter like a breeze,
While, high atween their swinging
tops, the stars appeared to
freeze.

Evil Spirit.

More calm and free,—speak out to
me, why such a vow was made.

Onora in sleep.

Because that God decreed my death
and I shrank back afraid.

Have patience, O dead father mine!
I did not fear to die;—

I wish I were a young dead child,
and had thy company!

I wish I lay beside thy feet, a buried
three-year child,

And wearing only a kiss of thine
upon my lips that smiled!

The linden-tree that covers thee
might so have shadowed twain—

For death itself I did not fear—'tis
love that makes the pain.

Love feareth death. I was no child
—I was betrothed that day;

I wore a troth-kiss on my lips I
could not give away.

How could I bear to lie content and
still beneath a stone,

And feel mine own betrothed go
by—alas! no more mine own,—

Go leading by, in wedding pomp,
some lovely lady brave,

With cheeks that blushed as red as
rose, while mine were white in
grave?

How could I bear to sit in Heaven,
on e'er so high a throne,

And hear him say to her—to *her*!
that else he loveth none?

Though e'er so high I sate above,
though e'er so low he spake,

As clear as thunder I would hear the
new oath he might take—

That *hers*, forsooth, are heavenly
eyes—ah me! while very dim

Some heavenly eyes (indeed of
Heaven!) would darken down
to *him*.

Evil Spirit.

Who told thee thou wert called to
death?

Onora in sleep.

I sate all night beside thee—

The grey owl on the ruined wall shut
both his eyes to hide thee,
And ever he flapped his heavy wing
all brokenly and weak,
And the long grass waved against the
sky, around his gasping beak.

I sate beside thee all the night, while
the moonlight lay forlorn,
Strewn round us like a dead world's
shroud, in ghastly fragments
torn:

And through the night, and through
the hush, and over the flapping
wing,

We heard beside the Heavenly
Gate the angels murmuring:—

"We heard them say," Put day to day,
and count the days to seven,

And God will draw Onora up the
golden stairs of Heaven:

And yet the Evil ones have leave
that purpose to defer,

For if she has no need of HIM, He has
no need of *her*."

Evil Spirit.

Speak out to me—speak bold and free.

Onora in sleep.

And then I heard thee say,—
"I count upon my rosary brown the
hours thou hast to stay!

Yet God permits us Evil ones to put
by that decree,

Since if thou hast no need of HIM, He
has no need of *thee*—

And if thou wilt forego the sight of
angels, verily

Thy true love gazing on thy face,
shall guess what angels be—

Nor bride shall pass, save thee" . . .

Alas!—my father's hand's a-
cold—

The meadows seem—

Evil Spirit.

Forbear the dream, or let the
vow be told!

Onora in sleep.

I vowed upon thy rosary brown, this
string of antique beads,

By charnel lichens overgrown, and
dank among the weeds—

This rosary brown, which is thine
own,—lost soul of buried nun,

Who, lost by vow, wouldst render
now all souls alike undone,—

I vowed upon thy rosary brown,—
and, till such vow should break,

A pledge always of living days, 'twas
 hung around my neck—
 I vowed to thee on rosary (Dead
 father, look not so!),
*I would not thank God in my weal, nor
 seek God in my woe.*

Evil Spirit.

And canst thou prove . . . ?

Onora in sleep.

O love—my love! I felt him
 near again!

I saw his steed on mountain-head,
 I heard it on the plain!

Was this no weal for me to feel?—is
 greater weal than this?

Yet when he came, I wept his name—
 and the angels heard but *his*.

Evil Spirit.

Well done, well done!

Onora in sleep.

Ay me! the sun . . . the dreamlight
 'gins to pine,—

Ay me! how dread can look the
 Dead!—Aroint thee, father
 mine!

She starteth from slumber, she sitteth
 upright,

And her breath comes in sobs while
 she stares through the night,
 There is nought. The great willow,
 her lattice before,

Large-drawn in the moon, lieth calm
 on the floor;

But her hands tremble fast as their
 pulses and free

From the death-clasp, close over—
 the BROWN ROSARY.

THIRD PART

'Tis a morn for a bridal; the merry
 bride-bell

Rings clear through the greenwood
 that skirts the chapelle;

And the priest at the altar awaiteth
 the bride,

And the sacristans slyly are jesting
 aside

At the work shall be doing.

While down through the wood rides
 that fair company,

The youths with the courtship, the
 maids with the glee,—

Till the chapel-cross opens to sight,
 and at once

All the maids sigh demurely and
 think for the nonce

"And so endeth a wooing!"

And the bride and the bridegroom
 are leading the way,

With his hand on her rein, and a
 word yet to say:

Her dropt eyelids suggest the soft
 answers beneath,—

And the little quick smiles come and
 go with her breath,

When she sigheth or speaketh.

And the tender bride-mother breaks
 off unaware

From an "Ave," to think that her
 daughter is fair,—

Till in nearing the chapel and glanc-
 ing before

She seeth her little son stand at the
 door,—

Is it play that he seeketh?

Is it play? when his eyes wander
 innocent-wild,

And sublimed with a sadness un-
 fitting a child!

He trembles not, weeps not—the
 passion is done,

And calmly he kneels in their midst,
 with the sun

On his head like a glory.

"O fair-featured maids, ye are
 many!" he cried,—

"But, in fairness and vileness, who
 matcheth the bride?"

O brave-hearted youths, ye are
 many! but whom,

For the courage and woe, can ye
 match with the groom,

As ye see them before ye?"

Out spake the bride's mother—"The
 vileness is thine,

If thou shame thine own sister, a
 bride at the shrine!"

Out spake the bride's lover—"The
 vileness be mine,

If he shame mine own wife at the
 hearth or the shrine,

And the charge be unproved.

"Bring the charge, prove the charge,
 brother! speak it aloud—

Let thy father and hers, hear it deep
 in his shroud!"

—“O father, thou seest—for dead
eyes can see—

How she wears on her bosom *a brown
rosary*,

O my father beloved ! ”

Then out laughed the bridegroom,
and out laughed withal

Both maidens and youths, by the
old chapel-wall—

“So she weareth no love-gift, kind
brother,” quoth he,

“She may wear, an she listeth, a
brown rosary,

Like a pure-hearted lady.”

Then swept through the chapel the
long bridal train :

Though he spake to the bride she
replied not again :

On, as one in a dream, pale and state-
ly she went

Where the altar-lights burn o’er the
great sacrament,

Faint with daylight, but steady.

But her brother had passed in between
them and her,

And calmly knelt down on the high-
altar stair—

Of an infantine aspect so stern to the
view

That the priest could not smile on the
child’s eyes of blue,

As he would for another.

He knelt like a child marble-sculp-
tured and white

That seems kneeling to pray on the
tomb of a knight,

With a look taken up to each iris of
stone

From the greatness and death where
he kneeleth, but none

From the face of a mother.

“In your chapel, O priest, ye have
wedded and shriven

Fair wives for the hearth, and fair
sinners for Heaven !

But this fairest my sister, ye think
now to wed,

Bid her kneel where she standeth, and
shrive her instead—

O shrive her and wed not ! ”

In tears, the bride’s mother,—“Sir
priest, unto thee

Would he lie, as he lied to this fair
company ! ”

In wrath, the bride’s lover,—“The lie
shall be clear !

Speak it out, boy ! the saints in their
niches shall hear—

Be the charge proved or said
not ! ”

Then serene in his childhood he lifted
his face,

And his voice sounded holy and fit
for the place—

“Look down from your niches, ye
still saints, and see

How she wears on her bosom *a
brown rosary* !

Is it used for the praying ? ”

The youths looked aside—to laugh
there was a sin—

And the maidens’ lips trembled from
smiles shut within :

Quoth the priest, “Thou art wild,
pretty boy ! Blessed she

Who prefers at her bridal a brown
rosary

To a worldly arraying ! ”

The bridegroom spake low and led
onward the bride,

And before the high altar they stood
side by side :

The rite-book is opened, the rite is
begun,

They have knelt down together to
rise up as one—

Who laughed by the altar ?

The maidens looked forward, the
youths looked around,—

The bridegroom’s eye flashed from
his prayer at the sound ;

And each saw the bride, as if no
bride she were,

Gazing cold at the priest without
gesture of prayer,

As he read from the psalter.

The priest never knew that she did
so, but still

He felt a power on him too strong
for his will,

And whenever the Great Name was
there to be read,

His voice sank to silence—THAT
could not be said,

Or the air could not hold it.

"I have sinned," quoth he, "I have sinned, I wot"—
 And the tears ran adown his old cheeks at the thought;
 They dropped fast on the book; but he read on the same,—
 And aye was the silence where should be the NAME,—
 As the choristers told it.

The rite-book is closed, and the rite being done
 They who knelt down together, arise up as one:

Fair riseth the bride—Oh, a fair bride is she,—

But, for all (think the maidens) that brown rosary,

No saint at her praying!

What aileth the bridegroom? He glares blank and wide—

Then suddenly turning, he kisseth the bride—

His lip stung her with cold: she glanced upwardly mute:

"Mine own wife," he said, and fell stark at her foot

In the word he was saying.

They have lifted him up,—but his head sinks away,

And his face showeth bleak in the sunshine and grey.

Leave him now where he lieth—for oh, never more

Will he kneel at an altar or stand on a floor!

Let his bride gaze upon him!

Long and still was her gaze, while they chafed him there,

And breathed in the mouth whose last life had kissed her.

But when they stood up—only *they*! with a start

The shriek from her soul struck her pale lips apart—

She has lived, and foregone him!

And low on his body she droppeth adown—

"Didst call me thine own wife, beloved—thine own?

Then take thine own with thee! thy coldness is warm

To the world's cold without thee! Come, keep me from harm

In a calm of thy teaching!"

She looked in his face earnest long, as in sooth

There were hope of an answer,—and then kissed his mouth,

And with head on his bosom, wept, wept bitterly,—

"Now, O God, take pity—take pity on me!—

God, hear my beseeching!"

She was 'ware of a shadow that crossed where she lay;

She was 'ware of a presence that withered the day—

Wild she sprang to her feet,—“I surrender to *thee*

The broken vow's pledge,—the accursed rosary,—

I am ready for dying!"

She dashed it in scorn to the marble-paved ground,

Where it fell mute as snow, and a weird music-sound

Crept up, like a chill, up the aisles long and dim,—

As the fiends tried to mock at the choristers' hymn,

And moaned at the trying.

FOURTH PART

Onora looketh listlessly adown the garden walk:

"I am weary, O my mother, of thy tender talk!

I am weary of the trees a-waving to and fro—

Of the steadfast skies above, the running brooks below;—

All things are the same but I,—only I am dreary,

And, mother, of my dreariness behold me very weary.

"Mother, brother, pull the flowers I planted in the spring

And smiled to think I should smile more upon their gathering.

The bees will find out other flowers—oh, pull them, dearest mine,

And carry them and carry me before St. Agnes' shrine."

—Whereat they pulled the summer flowers she planted in the spring,

And her and them all mournfully to Agnes' shrine did bring.

She looked up to the pictured saint
and gently shook her head—
"The picture is too calm for *me*—
too calm for *me*," she said :
"The little flowers we brought with
us, before it we may lay,
For those are used to look at Heaven,
—but *I* must turn away,—
Because no sinner under sun can dare
or bear to gaze
On God's or angel's holiness, except
in Jesu's face."

She spoke with passion after pause—
"And were it wisely done,
If we who cannot gaze above, should
walk the earth alone ?
If we whose virtue is so weak, should
have a will so strong,
And stand blind on the rocks, to
choose the right path from the
wrong ?
To choose perhaps a love-lit hearth,
instead of love and Heaven,—
A single rose, for a rose-tree, which
beareth seven times seven ?

A rose that droppeth from the hand,
that fadeth in the breast,—
Until, in grieving for the worst, we
learn what is the best !"
Then breaking into tears,—"*Dear
God*," she cried, "and must we
see
All blissful things depart from *us*, or
ere we go to *THEE* ?
We cannot guess *Thee* in the wood,
or hear *Thee* in the wind ?
Our cedars must fall round us, ere we
see the light behind ?
Ay sooth, we feel too strong in weal
to need *Thee* on that road,
But woe being come, the soul is
dumb that crieth not on '*God*.'"

Her mother could not speak for tears ;
she ever mused thus—
"*The bees will find out other flowers*,—
but what is left for *us* ?"
But her young brother stayed his
sobs and knelt beside her knee
—"Thou sweetest sister in the world,
hast never a word for *me* ?"
She passed her hand across his face,
she pressed it on his cheek,
So tenderly, so tenderly—she needed
not to speak.

The wreath which lay on shrine that
day, at vespers bloomed no
more—
The woman fair who placed it there,
had died an hour before.
Both perished mute, for lack of root,
earth's nourishment to reach ;—
O reader, breathe (the ballad saith)
some sweetness out of each !

THE MOURNING MOTHER

(OF THE DEAD BLIND)

I

Dost thou weep, mourning mother,
For thy blind boy in grave ?
That no more with each other,
Sweet counsel ye can have ?—
That *he*, left dark by nature,
Can never more be led
By thee, maternal creature,
Along smooth paths instead ?
That thou canst no more show him
The sunshine, by the heat ;
The river's silver flowing,
By murmurs at his feet ?
The foliage, by its coolness ;
The roses, by their smell ;
And all creation's fulness,
By Love's invisible ?
Weepst thou to behold not
His meek blind eyes again,—
Closed doorways which were folded,
And prayed against in vain—
And under which, sate smiling
The child-mouth evermore,
As one who watcheth, wiling
The time by, at a door ?
And weepst thou to feel not
His clinging hand on thine—
Which now, at dream-time, will not
Its cold touch disentwine ?
And weepst thou still offer,
Oh, never more to mark
His low soft words, made softer
By speaking in the dark ?
Weep on, thou mourning mother !

II

But since to him when living,
Thou wert both sun and moon,
Look o'er his grave, surviving,
From a high sphere alone !
Sustain that exaltation—
Expand that tender light,

And hold in mother-passion,
 Thy Blessed, in thy sight.
 See how he went out straightway
 From the dark world he knew,—
 No twilight in the gateway
 To mediate 'twixt the two,—
 Into the sudden glory,
 Out of the dark he trod,
 Departing from before thee
 At once to light and God !—
 For the first face, beholding
 The Christ's in its divine,—
 For the first place, the golden
 And tideless hyaline ;
 With trees, at lasting summer,
 That rock to songful sound,
 While angels, the new-comer,
 Wrap a still smile around.
 Oh, in the blessed psalm now,
 His happy voice he tries,—
 Spreading a thicker palm-bough,
 Than others, o'er his eyes,—
 Yet still, in all the singing,
 Thinks haply of thy song
 Which, in his life's first springing,
 Sang to him all night long,
 And wishes it beside him,
 With kissing lips that cool
 And soft did overglide him,—
 To make the sweetness full.
 Look up, O mourning mother ;
 Thy blind boy walks in light !
 Ye wait for one another,
 Before God's infinite !
 But *thou* art now the darkest,
 Thou mother left below—
Thou, the soul blind,—thou markest,
 Content that it be so ;—
 Until ye two give meeting
 Where Heaven's pearl-gate is,
 And *he* shall lead thy feet in,
 As once thou leddest *his* !
 Wait on, thou mourning mother.

A VALEDICTION

I

God be with thee, my beloved,—God
 be with thee !
 Else alone thou goest forth,
 Thy face unto the north,—
 Moor and pleasance, all around thee
 and beneath thee,
 Looking equal in one snow ;
 While I who try to reach thee,
 Vainly follow, vainly follow,
 With the farewell and the hollo,

And cannot reach thee so :
 Alas ! I can but teach thee !
 God be with thee, my beloved,—God
 be with thee !

II

Can I teach thee, my beloved,—can
 I teach thee ?
 If I said, " Go left or right,"
 The counsel would be light,—
 The wisdom, poor of all that could
 enrich thee.
 My right would show like left ;
 My raising would depress thee,—
 My choice of light would blind
 thee,—
 Of way, would leave behind thee—
 Of end, would leave bereft.
 Alas ! I can but bless thee !
 May God teach thee, my beloved,—
 may God teach thee !

III

Can I bless thee, my beloved,—can I
 bless thee ?
 What blessing word can I,
 From mine own tears, keep dry ?
 What flowers grow in my field where—
 with to dress thee ?
 My good reverts to ill ;
 My calmnesses would move
 thee,—
 My softnesses would prick
 thee,—
 My bindings up would break
 thee,—
 My crownings, curse and kill.
 Alas ! I can but love thee !
 May God bless thee, my beloved,—
 may God bless thee !

IV

Can I love thee, my beloved,—can I
 love thee ?
 And is *this* like love, to stand
 With no help in my hand,
 When strong as death I fain would
 watch above thee ?
 My love-kiss can deny
 No tear that falls beneath it :
 Mine oath of love can swear thee
 From no ill that comes near
 thee,—
 And thou diest while I breathe it,
 And I—I can but die !
 May God love thee, my beloved,—
 may God love thee !

LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP

A ROMANCE OF THE AGE

A poet writes to his friend. PLACE—*A room in Wycombe Hall.* TIME—*Late in the evening.*

DEAR my friend and fellow-student, I would lean my spirit o'er you !
Down the purple of this chamber, tears should scarcely run at will.
I am humbled who was humble ! Friend,—I bow my head before you !
You should lead me to my peasants,—but their faces are too still.

There's a lady—an earl's daughter ; she is proud and she is noble,
And she treads the crimson carpet, and she breathes the perfumed air,
And a kingly blood sends glances up her princely eye to trouble,
And the shadow of a monarch's crown is softened in her hair.

She has halls among the woodlands, and has castles by the breakers,
She has farms and she has manors, she can threaten and command,
And the palpitating engines snort in steam across her acres,
As they mark upon the blasted heaven the measure of the land.

There are none of England's daughters who can show a prouder presence ;
Upon princely suitors praying, she has looked in her disdain :
She was sprung of English nobles, I was born of English peasants ;
What was *I* that I should love her—save for competence to pain ?

I was only a poor poet, made for singing at her casement,
As the finches or the thrushes, while she thought of other things.
Oh, she walked so high above me, she appeared to my abasement,
In her lovely silken murmur, like an angel clad in wings !

Many vassals bow before her as her carriage sweeps their doorways ;
She has blest their little children,—as a priest or queen were she !
Far too tender, or too cruel far, her smile upon the poor was,
For I thought it was the same smile which she used to smile on *me*.

She has voters in the Commons, she has lovers in the palace—
And of all the fair court-ladies, few have jewels half as fine :
Oft the prince has named her beauty 'twixt the red wine and the chalice :
Oh, and what was *I* to love her ? my beloved, my Geraldine !

Yet I could not choose but love her—I was born to poet-uses—
To love all things set above me, all of good and all of fair.
Nymphs of mountain, not of valley, we are wont to call the Muses—
And in nympholeptic climbing, poets pass from mount to star.

And because I was a poet, and because the public praised me,
With their critical deduction for the modern writer's fault,
I could sit at rich men's tables,—though the courtesies that raised me,
Still suggested clear between us the pale spectrum of the salt.

And they praised me in her presence ;—" Will your book appear this summer ? "

Then returning to each other—" Yes, our plans are for the moors ; "
Then with whisper dropped behind me—" There he is ! the latest comer !
Oh, she only likes his verses ! what is over, she endures.

" Quite low-born ! self-educated ! somewhat gifted though by nature,—
And we make a point of asking him,—of being very kind :
You may speak, he does not hear you ; and besides, he writes no satire,—
All these serpents kept by charmers, leave the natural sting behind."

I grew scornfuller, grew colder, as I stood up there among them,
Till as frost intense will burn you, the cold scorning scorched my brow,
When a sudden silver speaking, gravely cadenced, overruling them,
And a sudden silken stirring touched my inner nature through.

I looked upward and beheld her! With a calm and regnant spirit,
Slowly round she swept her eyelids, and said clear before them all—
"Have you such superfluous honour, sir, that, able to confer it
You will come down, Mr. Bertram, as my guest to Wycombe Hall?"

Here she paused,—she had been paler at the first word of her speaking,
But because a silence followed it, blushed somewhat, as for shame;
Then, as scorning her own feeling, resumed calmly—"I am seeking
More distinction than these gentlemen think worthy of my claim.

"Ne'ertheless, you see, I seek it—not because I am a woman,"—
(Here her smile sprang like a fountain, and, so, overflowed her mouth)
"But because my woods in Sussex have some purple shades at gloaming,
Which are worthy of a king in state, or poet in his youth.

"I invite you, Mr. Bertram, to no scene for worldly speeches—
Sir, I scarce should dare—but only where God asked the thrushes first—
And if you will sing beside them, in the covert of my beeches,
I will thank you for the woodlands, . . . for the human world, at worst."

Then, she smiled around right childly, then, she gazed around right queenly,
And I bowed—I could not answer! Alternated light and gloom—
While as one who quells the lions, with a steady eye serenely,
She, with level fronting eyelids, passed on stately from the room.

Oh, the blessed woods of Sussex, I can hear them still around me,
With their leafy tide of greenery still rippling up the wind!
Oh, the cursed woods of Sussex! where the hunter's arrow found me,
When a fair face and a tender voice had made me mad and blind!

In that ancient hall of Wycombe, thronged the numerous guests invited,
And the lovely London ladies trod the floors with gliding feet,
And their voices low with fashion, not with feeling, softly freighted
All the air about the windows, with elastic laughter sweet.

For at eve, the open windows flung their light out on the terrace,
Which the floating orbs of curtains did with gradual shadow sweep,
While the swans upon the river, fed at morning by the heiress,
Trembled downward through their snowy wings at music in their sleep.

And there evermore was music, both of instrument and singing,
Till the finches of the shrubberies grew restless in the dark;
But the cedars stood up motionless, each in a moonlight ringing,
And the deer, half in the glimmer, strewed the hollows of the park.

And though sometimes she would bind me with her silver-corded speeches
To commix my words and laughter with the converse and the jest,
Oft I sate apart, and gazing on the river through the beeches,
Heard, as pure the swans swam down it, her pure voice o'erfloat the rest.

In the morning, horn of huntsman, hoof of steed, and laugh of rider,
Spread out cheery from the court-yard till we lost them in the hills,
While herself and other ladies, and her suitors left beside her,
Went a-wandering up the gardens through the laurels and abeles.

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown grass—bareheaded—with the flowing
Of the virginal white vesture gathered closely to her throat,

With the golden ringlets in her neck just quickened by her going,
And appearing to breathe sun for air and doubting if to float,—

With a branch of dewy maple, which her right hand held above her,
And which trembled a green shadow in betwixt her and the skies,—
As she turned her face in going, thus, she drew me on to love her,
And to worship the divineness of the smile hid in her eyes.

For her eyes alone smile constantly : her lips have serious sweetness,
And her front is calm—the dimple rarely ripples on her cheek ;
But her deep blue eyes smile constantly, as if they in discreetness
Kept the secret of a happy dream she does not care to speak.

Thus she drew me the first morning, out across into the garden,
And I walked among her noble friends and could not keep behind ;
Spake she unto all and unto me—" Behold, I am the warden
Of the song-birds in these lindens, which are cages to their mind.

" But within this swarded circle into which the lime-walk brings us,
Whence the beeches, rounded greenly, stand away in reverent fear,
I will let no music enter, saving what the fountain sings us
Which the lilies round the basin may seem pure enough to hear.

" The live air that waves the lilies waves the slender jet of water
Like a holy thought sent feebly up from soul of fasting saint !
Whereby lies a marble Silence, sleeping ! (Lough the sculptor wrought her)
So asleep, she is forgetting to say ' *Hush !* '—a fancy quaint.

" Mark how heavy white her eyelids ! not a dream between them lingers !
And the left hand's index droppeth from the lips upon the cheek !
And the right hand,—with the symbol rose held slack within the fingers,—
Has fallen backward in the basin—yet this Silence will not speak !

" That the essential meaning growing may exceed the special symbol,
Is the thought as I conceive it : it applies more high and low,—
Our true noblemen will often through right nobleness grow humble,
And assert an inward honour by denying outward show."

" Nay, your Silence," said I, " truly, holds her symbol rose but slackly,
Yet *she holds it*—or would scarcely be a Silence to our ken !
And your nobles wear their ermine on the outside, or walk blackly
In the presence of the social law as most ignoble men.

" Let the poets dream such dreaming ! Madam, in these British islands,
'Tis the substance that wanes ever, 'tis the symbol that exceeds :
Soon we shall have nought but symbol ! and, for statues like this Silence,
Shall accept the rose's image—in another case, the weed's."

" Not so quickly ! " she retorted,—“ I confess, where'er you go you
Find for things, names—shows for actions, and pure gold for honour clear ;
But when all is run to symbol in the Social, I will throw you
The world's book which now reads drily, and sit down with Silence here."

Half in playfulness she spoke, I thought, and half in indignation ;
Friends who listened, laughed her words off, while her lovers deemed her fair :
A fair woman flushed with feeling, in her noble-lighted station
Near the statue's white reposing—and both bathed in sunny air !—

With the trees round not so distant but you heard their vernal murmur
And beheld in light and shadow the leaves in and outward move ;
And the little fountain leaping toward the sun-heart to be warmer,
Then recoiling in a tremble from the too much light above—

'Tis a picture for remembrance ! and thus, morning after morning,
Did I follow as she drew me by the spirit to her feet—
Why her greyhound followed also ! dogs—we both were dogs for scorning—
To be sent back when she pleased it and her path lay through the wheat.

And thus, morning after morning, spite of vows and spite of sorrow,
Did I follow at her drawing, while the week-days passed along,
Just to feed the swans this noontide, or to see the fawns to-morrow,
Or to teach the hill-side echo some sweet Tuscan in a song.

Av, for sometimes on the hill-side, while we sate down in the gowans,
With the forest green behind us, and its shadow cast before,
And the river running under, and across it from the rowans
A brown partridge whirring near us till we felt the air it bore,—

There, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud the poems
Made by Tuscan flutes, or instruments more various of our own ;
Read the pastoral parts of Spenser—or the subtle interflowings
Found in Petrarch's sonnets—here's the book—the leaf is folded down !—

Or at times a modern volume,—Wordsworth's solemn-thoughted idyl,
Howitt's ballad-verse, or Tennyson's enchanted reverie,—
Or from Browning some "Pomegranate," which, if cut deep down the middle,
Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity !—

Or at times I read there, hoarsely, some new poem of my making—
Poets ever fail in reading their own verses to their worth,—
For the echo in you breaks upon the words which you are speaking,
And the chariot-wheels jar in the gate through which you drive them forth.

After, when we were grown tired of books, the silence round us flinging
A slow arm of sweet compression, felt with beatings at the breast,—
She would break out, on a sudden, in a gush of woodland singing,
Like a child's emotion in a god—a naiad tired of rest.

Oh, to see or hear her singing ! scarce I know which is divinest—
For her looks sing too—she modulates her gestures on the tune ;
And her mouth stirs with the song, like song ; and when the notes are finest,
'Tis the eyes that shoot out vocal light and seem to swell them on.

Then we talked—oh, how we talked ! her voice, so cadenced in the talking,
Made another singing—of the soul ! a music without bars—
While the leafy sounds of woodlands, humming round where we were walking,
Brought interposition worthy-sweet,—as skies about the stars.

And she spake such good thoughts natural, as if she always thought them—
She had sympathies so rapid, open, free as bird on branch,
Just as ready to fly east as west, whichever way besought them
In the birchen-wood a chirrup, or a cock-crow in the grange.

In her utmost lightness there is truth—and often she speaks lightly—
Has a grace in being gay, which even mournful souls approve,
For the root of some grave earnest thought is understruck so rightly
As to justify the foliage and the waving flowers above.

And she talked on—we talked, rather ! upon all things—substance—shadow—
Of the sheep that browsed the grasses—of the reapers in the corn—
Of the little children from the schools, seen winding through the meadow—
Of the poor rich world beyond them, still kept poorer by its scorn.

So, of men, and so, of letters—books are men of higher stature,
And the only men that speak aloud for future times to hear—

So, of mankind in the abstract, which grows slowly into nature,
Yet will lift the cry of "progress," as it trod from sphere to sphere.

And her custom was to praise me when I said,—“The Age culls simples,
With a broad clown's back turned broadly to the glory of the stars.
We are gods by our own reck'ning,—and may well shut up the temples,
And wield on, amid the incense-steam, the thunder of our cars.

“For we throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-admiring,
With, at every mile run faster,—‘O the wondrous, wondrous age,’
Little thinking if we work our souls as nobly as our iron,—
Or if angels will commend us at the goal of pilgrimage.

“Why, what *is* this patient entrance into nature's deep resources,
But the child's most gradual learning to walk upright without bane?—
When we drive out, from the cloud of steam, majestic white horses,
Are we greater than the first men who led black ones by the mane?

“If we trod the deeps of ocean, if we struck the stars in rising,
If we wrapped the globe intensely with one hot electric breath,
‘Twere but power within our *tether*—no new spirit-power comprising—
And in life we were not greater men nor bolder men in death.”

She was patient with my talking; and I loved her—loved her, certes,
As I loved all heavenly objects, with uplifted eyes and hands!
As I loved pure inspirations—loved the graces, loved the virtues,—
In a Love content with writing his own name, on desert sands.

Or at least I thought so, purely!—thought, no idiot Hope was raising
Any crown to crown Love's silence—silent Love that sate alone—
Out, alas! the stag is like me—he, that tries to go on grazing
With the great deep gun-wound in his neck, then reels with sudden moan.

It was thus I reeled! I told you that her hand had many suitors—
But she smiles them down imperially, as Venus did the waves,
And with such a gracious coldness, that they cannot press their futures
On the present of her courtesy which yieldingly enslaves.

And this morning, as I sate alone within the inner chamber
With the great saloon beyond it, lost in pleasant thought serene—
For I had been reading Camoëns—that poem you remember,
Which his lady's eyes are praised in, as the sweetest ever seen.

And the book lay open, and my thought flew from it, taking from it
A vibration and impulsion to an end beyond its own,—
As the branch of a green osier, when a child would overcome it,
Springs up freely from his clasping, and goes swinging in the sun.

As I mused I heard a murmur,—it grew deep as it grew longer—
Speakers using earnest language—“Lady Geraldine, you *would*!”
And I heard a voice that pleaded ever on, in accents stronger
As a sense of reason gave it power to make its rhetoric good.

Well I knew that voice—it was an earl's, of soul that matched his station—
Of a soul complete in lordship—might and right read on his brow;
Very finely courteous—far too proud to doubt his domination
Of the common people,—he atones for grandeur by a bow.

High straight forehead, nose of eagle, cold blue eyes, of less expression
Than resistance,—coldly casting off the looks of other men,
As steel, arrows,—inelastic lips, which seem to taste possession,
And be cautious lest the common air should injure or distract.

For the rest, accomplished, upright,—ay, and standing by his order
 With a bearing not ungraceful ; fond of art and letters too ;
 Just a good man made a proud man,—as the sandy rocks that border
 A wild coast, by circumstances, in a regnant ebb and flow.

Thus, I knew that voice—I heard it—and I could not help the hearkening.
 In the room I stood up blindly, and my burning heart within
 Seemed to seethe and fuse my senses, till they ran on all sides darkening,
 And scorched, weighed, like melted metal, round my feet that stood therein.

And that voice, I heard it pleading, for love's sake—for wealth, position . . .
 For the sake of liberal uses, and great actions to be done—
 And she interrupted gently—"Nay, my lord, the old tradition
 Of your Normans, by some worthier hand than mine is, should be won."

"Ah, that white hand !" he said quickly,—and in his he either drew it
 Or attempted—for with gravity and instance she replied—

"Nay, indeed, my lord, this talk is vain, and we had best eschew it,
 And pass on, like friends, to other points less easy to decide."

What he said again, I know not. It is likely that his trouble
 Worked his pride up to the surface, for she answered in slow scorn—
 "And your lordship judges rightly. Whom I marry, shall be noble,
 Ay, and wealthy. I shall never blush to think how he was born."

There, I maddened ! her words stung me ! Life swept through me into fever,
 And my soul sprang up astonished ; sprang, full-statured in an hour.
 Know you what it is when anguish, with apocalyptic NEVER,
 To a Pythian height dilates you,—and despair sublimates to power ?

From my brain, the soul-wings budded,—waved a flame about my body,
 Whence conventions coiled to ashes. I felt self-drawn out, as man,
 From amalgamate false natures ; and I saw the skies grow ruddy
 With the deepening feet of angels, and I knew what spirits can.

I was mad—inspired—say either ! anguish worketh inspiration !
 Was a man, or beast—perhaps so ; for the tiger roars, when speared !
 And I walked on, step by step, along the level of my passion—
 Oh my soul ! and passed the doorway to her face, and never feared.

He had left her,—peradventure, when my footstep proved my coming—
 But for *her*—she half arose, then sate—grew scarlet and grew pale :
 Oh, she trembled !—'tis so always with a worldly man or woman
 In the presence of true spirits—what else *can* they do but quail ?

Oh, she fluttered like a tame bird, in among its forest-brothers
 Far too strong for it ! then drooping, bowed her face upon her hands—
 And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths of her and others !
 I, she planted in the desert, swathed her, windlike, with my sands.

I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-rooted though leaf-verdant,—
 Trod them down with words of shaming,—all the purple and the gold.
 And the "landed stakes" and lordships—all, that spirits pure and ardent
 Are cast out of love and honour, because chancing not to hold.

"For myself I do not argue," said I, "though I love you, Madam,
 But for better souls that nearer to the height of yours have trod—
 And this age shows, to my thinking, still more infidels to Adam,
 Than directly, by profession, simple infidels to God.

"Yet, O God" (I said), "O grave" (I said), "O mother's heart and bosom,
 With whom first and last are equal, saint and corpse and little child !

We are fools to your deductions, in these figments of heart-closing !
We are traitors to your causes, in these sympathies defiled !

" Learn more reverence, Madam, not for rank or wealth—*that* needs no learning !

That comes quickly—quick as sin does ! ay, and often works to sin ;
But for Adam's seed, MAN ! Trust me, 'tis a clay above your scorning,
With God's image stamped upon it, and God's kindling breath within.

" What right have you, Madam, gazing in your palace mirror daily,
Getting so, by heart, your beauty, which all others must adore,
While you draw the golden ringlets down your fingers, to vow gaily
You will wed no man that's only good to God,—and nothing more ?

" Why, what right have you, made fair by that same God—the sweetest woman

Of all women He has fashioned—with your lovely spirit-face,
Which would seem too near to vanish if its smile were not so human,—
And your voice of holy sweetness, turning common words to grace ;

" What right *can* you have, God's other works to scorn, despise, . . . revile them

In the gross, as mere men, broadly—not as *noble* men, forsooth,—
As mere pariahs of the outer world, forbidden to assail them
In the hope of living,—dying,—near that sweetness of your mouth ?

" Have you any answer, Madam ? If my spirit were less earthy—
If its instrument were gifted with a better silver string—
I would kneel down where I stand, and say—' Behold me ! I am worthy
Of thy loving, for I love thee ! I am worthy as a king.'

" As it is—your ermined pride, I swear, shall feel this stain upon her,
That I, poor, weak, tost with passion, scorned by me and you again,
Love you, Madam—dare to love you—to my grief and your dishonour—
To my endless desolation, and your impotent disdain ! "

Mere mad words like these—mere madness ! friend, I need not write them fuller,

For I hear my hot soul dropping on the lines in showers of tears—
Oh, a woman ! friend, a woman ! Why, a beast had scarce been duller
Than roar bestial loud complaints against the shining of the spheres.

But at last there came a pause. I stood all vibrating with thunder
Which my soul had used. The silence drew her face up like a call.
Could you guess what word she uttered ? She looked up, as if in wonder,
With tears beaded on her lashes, and said " Bertram ! " it was all.

If she had cursed me—and she might have—or if even, with queenly bearing
Which at need is used by women, she had risen up and said,

" Sir, you are my guest, and therefore I have given you a full hearing—
Now, beseech you, choose a name exacting somewhat less, instead—"

I had borne it !—but that " Bertram "—why it lies there on the paper
A mere word, without her accent,—and you cannot judge the weight
Of the calm which crushed my passion ! I seemed swimming in a vapour,—
And her gentleness destroyed me whom her scorn made desolate.

So, struck backward and exhausted with that inward flow of passion
Which had rushed on, sparing nothing, into forms of abstract truth,—
With a logic agonising through unseemly demonstration—
And with youth's own anguish turning grimly grey the hairs of youth,—

With the sense accursed and instant, that if even I spake wisely
 I spake basely—using truth,—if what I spake, indeed, was true—
 To avenge wrong on a woman—*her*, who sate there weighing nicely
 A poor manhood's worth, found guilty of such deeds as I could do !—

With such wrong and woe exhausted—what I suffered and occasioned,—
 As a wild horse through a city runs with lightning in his eyes,
 And then dashing at a church's cold and passive wall, impassioned,
 Strikes the death into his burning brain, and blindly drops and dies—

So I fell, struck down before her ! Do you blame me, friend, for weakness ?
 'Twas my strength of passion slew me !—fell before her like a stone !
 Fast the dreadful world rolled from me, on its roaring wheels of blackness—
 When the light came I was lying in this chamber, and alone.

Oh, of course, she charged her lacqueys to bear out the sickly burden,
 And to cast it from her scornful sight—but not *beyond* the gate—
 She is too kind to be cruel, and too haughty not to pardon
 Such a man as I—'twere something to be level to her hate.

But for *me*—you now are conscious why, my friend, I write this letter,—
 How my life is read all backward, and the charm of life undone !
 I shall leave her house at dawn—I would to-night, if I were better—
 And I charge my soul to hold my body strengthened for the sun.

When the sun has dyed the oriel, I depart with no last gazes,
 No weak moanings—one word only, left in writing for her hands,—
 Out of reach of her derision and some unavailing praises,
 To make front against this anguish in the far and foreign lands.

Blame me not; I would not squander life in grief—I am abstemious ;
 I but nurse my spirit's falcon, that its wing may soar again.
 There's no room for tears of weakness in the blind eyes of a Phemius :
 Into work the poet kneads them,—and he does not die *till then*.

CONCLUSION

Bertram finished the last pages, while along the silence ever
 Still in hot and heavy splashes, fell his tears on every leaf :
 Having ended he leans backward in his chair, with lips that quiver
 From the deep unspoken, ay, and deep unwritten thoughts of grief.

Soh ! how still the lady standeth ! 'tis a dream—a dream of mercies !
 'Twixt the purple lattice-curtains, how she standeth still and pale !
 'Tis a vision, sure, of mercies, sent to soften his self-curses—
 Sent to sweep a patient quiet o'er the tossing of his wail.

" Eyes," he said, " now throbbing through me ! are ye eyes that did undo
 me ?

Shining eyes, like antique jewels set in Parian statue-stone !
 Underneath that calm white forehead, are ye ever burning torrid,
 O'er the desolate sand-desert of my heart and life undone ? "

With a murmurous stir uncertain, in the air, the purple curtain
 Swelleth in and swelleth out around her motionless pale brows,
 While the gliding of the river sends a rippling noise for ever
 Through the open casement whitened by the moonlight's slant repose.

Said he—" Vision of a lady ! stand there silent, stand there steady !
 Now I see it plainly, plainly ; now I cannot hope or doubt—
 There, the brows of mild repression—there, the lips of silent passion,
 Curv'd like an archer's bow to send the bitter arrows out."

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,—
And approached him slowly, slowly, in a gliding measured pace ;
With her two white hands extended, as if praying one offended,
And a look of supplication, gazing earnest in his face.

Said he—"Wake me by no gesture,—sound of breath, or stir of vesture ;
Let the blessed apparition melt not yet to its divine !
No approaching—hush ! no breathing ! or my heart must swoon to death in
The too utter life thou bringest—O thou dream of Geraldine !"

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling—
But the tears ran over lightly from her eyes, and tenderly ;
"Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me ? Is no woman far above me
Found more worthy of thy poet-heart than such a one as I ?"

Said he—"I would dream so ever, like the flowing of that river,
Flowing ever in a shadow greenly onward to the sea !
So, thou vision of all sweetness—princely to a full completeness,—
Would my heart and life flow onward—deathward—through this dream of
THEE !"

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,—
While the silver tears ran faster down the blushing of her cheeks ;
Then with both her hands enfolding both of his, she softly told him,
"Bertram, if I say I love thee, . . . 'tis the vision only speaks."

Softened, quickened to adore her, on his knee he fell before her—
And she whispered low in triumph—"It shall be as I have sworn !
Very rich he is in virtues,—very noble,—noble, certes ;
And I shall not blush in knowing that men call him lowly born."

A LAMENT FOR ADONIS

FROM BION

I

I MOURN for Adonis—Adonis is dead !
Fair Adonis is dead, and the Loves
are lamenting.

Sleep, Cypris, no more, on thy purple-
strewn bed ;

Arise, wretch stoled in black,—beat
thy breast unrelenting,
And shriek to the worlds, "Fair
Adonis is dead."

II

I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are
lamenting.

He lies on the hills in his beauty
and death,—

The white tusk of a boar has trans-
pierced his white thigh !

Cytherea grows mad at his thin
gasping breath,

While the black blood drips down on
the pale ivory :

And his eyeballs lie quenched with
the weight of his brows.

The rose fades from his lips, and upon
them just parted

The kiss dies the goddess consents
not to lose,

Though the kiss of the Dead cannot
make her glad-hearted—

He knows not who kisses him dead
in the dews.

III

I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are
lamenting.

Deep, deep in the thigh, is Adonis's
wound,

But a deeper, is Cypris's bosom pre-
senting—

The youth lieth dead while his dogs
howl around,

And the nymphs weep aloud from the
mists of the hill,—

And the poor Aphrodite, with
tresses unbound,

All dishevelled, unsandalled, shrieks
mournful and shrill

Through the dusk of the groves.
The thorns, tearing her feet,

Gather up the red flower of her blood
which is holy,

Each footstep she takes,—and the
valleys repeat
The sharp cry which she utters, and
draw it out slowly.
She calls on her spouse, her Assy-
rian,—on him
Her own youth,—while the dark
blood spreads over his body—
The chest taking hue from the gash
in the limb,
And the bosom once ivory, turning
to ruddy.

IV

Ah, ah, Cythera! the Loves are
lamenting,
She lost her fair spouse, and so lost
her fair smile—
When he lived she was fair by the
whole world's consenting,
Whose fairness is dead with him!
woe worth the while!
All the mountains above and the oak-
lands below
Murmur, ah, ah, Adonis! the streams
overflow
Aphrodite's deep wail,—river-foun-
tains in pity
Weep soft in the hills, and the flowers,
as they blow,
Redden outward with sorrow, while
all hear her go
With the song of her sadness
through mountain and city.

V

Ah, ah, Cythera! Adonis is dead:
Fair Adonis is dead—Echo answers,
Adonis!
Who weeps not for Cypris, when bow-
ing her head
She stares at the wound where it
gapes and astonies?
—When, ah, ah!—she saw how the
blood ran away
And empurpled the thigh, and,
with wild hands flung out,
Said with sobs, "Stay, Adonis! un-
happy one, stay,—
Let me feel thee once more—let me
ring thee about
With the clasp of my arms, and press
kiss into kiss!
Wait a little, Adonis, and kiss me
again,
For the last time, beloved,—and but
so much of this

That the kiss may learn life from
the warmth of the strain!
—Till thy breath shall exude from
thy soul to my mouth,
To my heart,—and the love-charm
I once more receiving,
May drink thy love in it, and keep, of
a truth
That one kiss in the place of Adonis
the living.
Thou fliest me, mournful one, fliest
me far,
My Adonis, and seekest the Ache-
ron portal,—
To Hell's cruel King goest down with
a scar,
While I weep and live on like a
wretched immortal,
And follow no step!—O Persephonè,
take him,
My husband!—thou'rt better and
brighter than I,
So all beauty flows down to thee! I
cannot make him
Look up at my grief,—there's des-
pair in my cry,
Since I wail for Adonis, who died to
me . . . died to me . . .
—Then I fear thee!—Art thou dead,
my Adored?
Passion ends like a dream in the sleep
that's denied to me.—
Cypris is widowed,—the Loves seek
their lord
All the house through in vain! Charm
of cestus has ceased
With thy clasp!—O too bold in the
hunt past preventing,
Ay, mad: thou so fair . . . to have
strife with a beast!"—
Thus the goddess wailed on—and
the Loves are lamenting.

VI

Ah, ah, Cythera! Adonis is dead,—
She wept tear after tear, with the
blood which was shed,—
And both turned into flowers for the
earth's garden-close;
Her tears, to the wind flower,—his
blood, to the rose.

VII

I mourn for Adonis—Adonis is dead.
Weep no more in the woods, Cy-
thera, thy lover!

So, well ! make a place for his corse in
thy bed,
With the purples thou sleepest in,
under and over.

He's fair though a corse—a fair corse
... like a sleeper—

Lay soft in the silks he had pleasure
to fold,

When, beside thee at night, holy
dreams deep and deeper

Enclosed his young life on the
couch made of gold !

Love him still, 'poor Adonis ! cast on
him together

The crowns and the flowers ! since
he died from the place,

Why let all die with him—let the
blossoms go wither ;

Rain myrtles and olive-buds down
on his face !

Rain the myrrh down, let all that is
best fall a-pining,

Since the myrrh of his life from
thy keeping is swept !—

—Pale he lay, thine Adonis, in purples
reclining,—

The Loves raised their voices
around him and wept.

They have shorn their bright curls off
to cast on Adonis :

One treads on his bow,—on his arrows,
another,—

One breaks up a well-feathered quiver ;
and one is

Bent low at a sandal, untying the
strings,

And one carries the vases of gold
from the springs,

While one washes the wound,—and
behind them a brother

Fans down on the body sweet airs
with his wings.

VIII

Cytherea herself, now, the Loves are
lamenting.

Each torch at the door Hymenæus
blew out,

And the marriage-wreath dropping its
leaves as repenting,

No more "Hymen, Hymen," 'is
chanted about,

But the *ai ai* instead—"ai alas" is
begun

For Adonis, and then follows "ai
—Hymenæus !"

The Graces are weeping for Cinyris'
son,

Sobbing low, each to each, "His
fair eyes cannot see us !"—

Their wail strikes more shrill than the
sadder Dionè's !

The Fates mourn aloud for Adonis,
Adonis,

Deep chanting ! he hears not a word
that they say :

He *would* hear, but Persephonè has
him in keeping.

—Cease moan, Cytherea—leave pomps
for to-day,

And weep new when a new year
refits thee for weeping.

A VISION OF POETS

"O sacred Essence, lighting me this hour,
How may I lightly stile thy great power ?

Echo. Power ! but of whence ? under the green-
wood spray ?

Or liv'st in Heaven ? saye.

Echo. In Heavens aye ! In Heavens aye.
By alms, by fasting, prayer,—by paine ?

Echo. By paine.
Show me the paine, it shall be undergone :
I to mine end will still go on.

Echo. Go on."

—*Britannia's Pastorals.*

A POET could not sleep aright,
For his soul kept up too much light
Under his eyelids for the night.

And thus he rose disquieted
With sweet rhymes ringing through
his head,

And in the forest wandered,—

Where, sloping up the darkest glades,
The moon had drawn long colonnades,
Upon whose floor the verdure fades

To a faint silver,—pavement fair
The antique wood-nymphs scarce
would dare

To footprint o'er, had such been there,

And rather sit by breathlessly,
With fear in their large eyes to see
The consecrated sight. But HE—

The poet—who with spirit-kiss
Familiar, had long claimed for his
Whatever earthly beauty is,—

Who also in his spirit bore
A Beauty passing the earth's store,
Walked calmly onward evermore.

His aimless thoughts in metre went,
Like a babe's hand without intent
Drawn down a seven-stringed instru-
ment.

Nor jarred it with his humour, as,
With a faint stirring down the grass,
An apparition fair did pass.

He might have feared another time,
But all things fair and strange did
chime

With his thoughts then—as rhyme to
rhyme.

An angel had not startled him,
Alighted from Heaven's burning rim
To breathe from glory in the Dim—

Much less a lady, riding slow
Upon a palfrey white as snow,
And smooth as a snow-cloud could go.

Full upon his she turned her face,—
"What ho, sir poet! dost thou pace
Our woods at night, in ghostly chace

"Of some fair Dryad of old tales,
Who chaunts between the nightingales,
And over sleep by song prevails?"

She smiled; but he could see arise
Her soul from far adown her eyes,
Prepared as if for sacrifice.

She looked a queen who seemeth gay
From royal grace alone; "Now, nay,"
He answered,—“slumber passed
away.

"Compelled by instincts in my head,
That I should see to-night instead
Of a fair nymph, some fairer Dread."

She looked up quickly to the sky,
And spake :—"The moon's regality
Will hear no praise! she is as I.

"She is in heaven, and I on earth;
This is my kingdom—I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth."

He brake in with a voice that
mourned—

"To their worth, lady? They are
scorned

By men they sing for, till inurned.

"To their worth? Beauty in the
mind

Leaves the hearth cold,—and love-
refined

Ambitions make the world unkind.

"The boor who ploughs the daisy
down,
The chief whose mortgage of renown,
Fixed upon graves, has bought a
crown—

"Both these are happier, more ap-
proved,
Than poets!—Why should I be
moved
In saying . . . both are more be-
loved?"

"The south can judge not of the
north,"

She resumed calmly—"I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth.

"Yea, verily! to anoint them all
With blessed oils, which surely shall
Smell sweeter as the ages fall."

"As sweet," the poet said, and rung
A low sad laugh, "as flowers do,
sprung
Out of their graves when they die
young.

"As sweet as window eglantine—
Some bough of which, as they decline,
The hired nurse gathers at their sign.

"As sweet, in short, as perfumed
shroud,
Which the fair Roman maidens sewed
For English Keats singing aloud."

The lady answered, "Yea, as sweet!
The things thou namest being com-
plete
In fragrance, as I measure it.

"Since sweet the death-clothes and
the knell
Of him who, having lived, dies well,—
And holy sweet the asphodel,

"Stirred softly by that foot of his,
When he treads brave on all that is,
Into the world of souls, from this!

"Since sweet the tears, dropped at
the door
Of tearless Death,—and even before;
Sweet, consecrated evermore!

"What! dost thou judge it a strange
thing,
That poets, crowned for vanquishing,
Should bear some dust from out the
ring?"

"Come on with me, come on with me ;
And learn in coming. Let me free
Thy spirit into verity."

She ceased : her palfrey's paces sent
No separate noises as she went,—
'Twas a bee's hum—a little spent.

And while the poet seemed to tread
Along the drowsy noise so made,
The forest heaved up overhead

Its billowy foliage through the air,
And the calm stars did far and spare,
O'erswim the masses everywhere,—

Save when the overtopping pines
Did bar their tremulous light with
lines
All fixed and black. Now the moon
shines

A broader glory. You may see
The trees grow rarer presently,—
The air blows up more fresh and free.

Until they come from dark to light,
And from the forest to the sight
Of the large Heaven-heart, bare with
night,—

A fiery throb in every star,
Those burning arteries that are
The conduits of God's life afar,—

A wild brown moorland underneath,
And four pools breaking up the heath
With white low gleanings, blank as
death.

Beside the first pool, near the wood,
A dead tree in set horror stood,
Peeled and disjointed, stark as rood ;
Since thunder-stricken, years ago,
Fixed in the spectral strain and throe
Wherewith it struggled from the blow :

A monumental tree, alone,
That will not bend in storms nor groan,
But break off sudden like a stone,—

Its lifeless shadow lies oblique
Upon the pool,—where, javelin-like,
The star-rays quiver while they strike.

"Drink," said the lady, very still—
"Be holy and cold." He did her will,
And drank the starry water chill.

The next pool they came near unto,
Was bare of trees : there, only grew
Straight flags and lilies, just a few,

Which sullen on the water sate,
And leant their faces on the flat,
As weary of the starlight-state.

"Drink," said the lady, grave and
slow—

"*World's use* behoveth thee to know."
He drank the bitter wave below.

The third pool, girt with thorny
bushes,
And flaunting weeds, and reeds and
rushes
That winds sang through in mournful
gushes,

Was whitely smeared in many a round
By a slow slime : the starlight s wound
Over the ghastly light it found.

"Drink," said the lady, sad and
slow—

"*World's love* behoveth thee to know."
He looked to her, commanding so.

Her brow was troubled, but her eye
Struck clear to his soul. For all reply
He drank the water suddenly,—

Then, with a deathly sickness, passed
Beside the fourth pool and the last,
Where weights of shadow were down-
cast

From yew and alder, and rank trails
Of nightshade clasping the trunk-
scales,
And flung across the intervals

From yew to yew. Who dareth stoop
Where those dank branches overdroop,
Into his heart the chill strikes up ;

He hears a silent gliding coil—
The snakes strain hard against the
soil—

His foot slips in their slimy oil ;

And toads seem crawling on his hand,
And clinging bats, but dimly scanned,
Full in his face their wings expand.

A paleness took the poet's cheek :
"Must I drink *here* ?" he seemed to
seek

The lady's will, with utterance meek.

"Ay, ay," she said, "it so must be"—
(And this time she spake cheerfully)
"Behoves thee know *World's cruelty*."

He bowed his forehead till his mouth
Curved in the wave, and drank unloth,
As if from rivers of the south.

His lip sobbed through the water rank,
His heart paused in him while he drank,
His brain beat heart-like—rose and sank,—

And he swooned backward to a dream,
Wherein he lay 'twixt glom and gleam,
With Death and Life at each extreme.

And spiritual thunders, born of soul
Not cloud, did leap from mystic pole,
And o'er him roll and counter-roll,

Crushing their echoes reboant
With their own wheels. Did Heaven
so grant
His spirit a sign of covenant ?

At last came silence. A slow kiss
Did crown his forehead after this :
His eyelids flew back for the bliss.

The lady stood beside his head,
Smiling a thought, with hair dispread :
The moonshine seemed dishevelled

In her sleek tresses manifold,—
Like Danae's in the rain of old,
That dripped with melancholy gold.

But she was holy, pale, and high—
As one who saw an ecstasy
Beyond a foretold agony.

"Rise up!" said she, with voice
where song
Eddied through speech—"rise up!
be strong!
And learn how right avenges
wrong."

The poet rose up on his feet :
He stood before an altar set
For sacrament, with vessels meet,

And mystic altar-lights which shine
As if their flames were crystalline
Carved flames that would not shrink
or pine.

The altar filled the central place
Of a great church, and toward its face
Long aisles did shoot and interlace.

And from it a continuous mist
Of incense (round the edges kissed
By a pure light of amethyst)

Wound upward slowly and throbbingly,
Cloud within cloud, right silverly,
Cloud above cloud, victoriously,—

Broke full against the arched roof,
And, thence refracting, eddied off,
And floated through the marble woof

Of many a fine-wrought architrave,—
Then, poising the white masses brave,
Swept solemnly down aisle and nave.

And now in dark, and now in light,
The countless columns, glimmering
white,
Seemed leading out to the Infinite.

Plunged half-way up the shaft they
showed,
In the pale shifting incense-cloud,
Which flowed them by, and over-
flowed,

Till mist and marble seemed to blend,
And the whole temple, at the end,
With its own incense to distend,—

The arches, like a giant's bow,
To bend and slacken,—and below,
The niched saints to come and go.

Alone, amid the shifting scene,
That central altar stood serene
In its clear steadfast taper-sheen.

Then first, the poet was aware
Of a chief-angel standing there
Before that altar, in the glare.

His eyes were dreadful, for you saw
That *they* saw God—his lips and jaw
Grand-made and strong, as Sinai's
Law

They could enunciate, and refrain
From vibratory after-pain ;
And his brow's height was sovereign.

On the vast background of his wings
Arose his image ; and he flings,
From each plumed arc, pale glitterings

And fiery flakes (as beateth more
Or less, the angel-heart) before
And round him, upon roof and floor,

Edging with fire the shifting fumes :
While at his side, 'twixt lights and
glooms,
The phantasm of an organ booms.

Extending from which instrument
And angel, right and left-way bent,
The poet's sight grew sentient

Of a strange company around
And toward the altar,—pale and
bound,
With bay above the eyes profound.

Deathful their faces were, and yet
The power of life was in them set—
Never forgot, nor to forget.

Sublime significance of mouth,
Dilated nostril full of youth,
And forehead royal with the truth.

These faces were not multiplied
Beyond your count, but side by side
Did front the altar, glorified !

Still as a vision, yet exprest
Full as an action—look and geste
Of buried saint, in risen rest.

The poet knew them. Faint and dim
His spirits seemed to sink in him,
Then, like a dolphin, change and
swim

The current—These were poets true,
Who died for Beauty, as martyrs do
For Truth—the ends being scarcely
two.

God's prophets of the Beautiful
These poets were—of iron rule,
The rugged cilix, serge of wool.

Here, Homer, with the broad sus-
pense
Of thunderous brows, and lips intense
Of garrulous god-innocence.

There, Shakespeare ! on whose fore-
head climb
The crowns o' the World. Oh, eyes
sublime—

With tears and laughter for all time !
Here, Æschylus,—the women swooned
To see so awful, when he frowned
As the gods did !—he standeth
crowned.

Euripides, with close and mild
Scholastic lips,—that could be wild,
And laugh or sob out like a child,

Even in the classes. Sophocles,
With that king's look which, down
the trees,
Followed the dark effigies

Of the lost Theban. Hesiod old,
Who, somewhat blind and deaf and
cold,
Cared most for gods and bulls. And
bold

Electric Pindar, quick as fear,
With race-dust on his cheeks, and
clear

Slant startled eyes that seem to hear
The chariot rounding the last goal,
To hurtle past it in his soul.
And Sappho, crowned with glorieole

Of ebon hair on calmed brows—
O poet-woman ! none foregoes
The leap, attaining the repose !

Theocritus, with glittering locks
Dropt sideways, as betwixt the rocks
He watched the visionary flocks.

And Aristophanes, who took
The world with mirth, and laughter-
struck
The hollow caves of Thought and
woke

The infinite echoes hid in each.
And Virgil : shade of Mantuan beech
Did help the shade of bay to reach
And knit around his forehead high ;—
For his gods wore less majesty
Than his brown bees hummed death-
lessly.

Lucretius—nobler than his mood :
Who dropped his plummet down the
broad

Deep universe, and said " No God,"

Finding no bottom : he denied
Divinely the divine, and died
Chief poet on the Tiber-side,

By grace of God ! his face is stern
As one compelled, in spite of scorn,
To teach a truth he could not learn.

And Ossian, dimly seen or guessed :
Once counted greater than the rest,
When mountain-winds blew out his
vest.

And Spenser drooped his dreaming
head

(With languid sleep-smile you had
said

From his own verse engendered)

On Ariosto's, till they ran
Their curls in one.—The Italian
Shot nimbler heat of bolder man

From his fine lids. And Dante stern
And sweet, whose spirit was an urn
For wine and milk, poured out in turn.

Hard-souled Alfieri; and fancy-
willed

Boiardo,—who with laughter filled
The pauses of the jostled shield.

And Berni, with a hand stretched out
To sleek that storm. And not
without

The wreath he died in, and the doubt

He died by, Tasso! bard and lover,
Whose visions were too thin to cover
The face of a false woman over.

And soft Racine,—and grave Cor-
neille—

The orator of rhymes, whose wail
Scarce shook his purple. And Pe-
trarch pale,

From whose brainlighted heart were
thrown

A thousand thoughts beneath the sun,
Each lucid with the name of One.

And Camoens, with that look he had,
Compelling India's Genius sad
From the wave through the Lusiad,—

The murmurs of the storm-cape
ocean

Indrawn in vibrative emotion
Along the verse. And while devotion

In his wild eyes fantastic shone
Under the tansure blown upon
By airs celestial,—Calderon.

And bold De Vega,—who breathed
quick

Verse after verse, till death's old trick
Put pause to life and rhetoric.

And Goethe—with that reaching eye
His soul reached out from, far and
high,

And fell from inner entity.

And Schiller, with heroic front
Worthy of Plutarch's kiss upon't,—
Too large for wreath of modern wont.

And Chaucer, with his infantine
Familiar clasp of things divine—
That mark upon his lip is wine.

Here, Milton's eyes strike piercing-
dim :

The shapes of suns and stars did swim
Like clouds from them, and granted
him

God for sole vision. Cowley, there;
Whose active fancy debonair
Drew straws like amber,—foul to fair.

Drayton and Browne,—with smiles
they drew

From outward Nature, still kept new
From their own inward nature true.

And Marlowe, Webster, Fletcher,
Ben—

Whose fire-hearts sowed our furrows,
when

The world was worthy of such men.

And Burns, with pungent passionings
Set in his eyes. Deep lyric springs
Are of the fire-mount's issuings.

And Shelley, in his white ideal,
All statue blind! And Keats the real
Adonis, with the hymeneal

Fresh vernal buds half sunk between
His youthful curls, kissed straight and
sheen

In his Rome-grave, by Venus queen.

And poor, proud Byron,—sad as
grave,

And salt as life : forlornly brave,
And quivering with the dart he drave.

And visionary Coleridge, who
Did sweep his thoughts as angels do
Their wings, with cadence up the
Blue.

These poets faced (and other more)
The lighted altar booming o'er
The clouds of incense dim and hoar :

And all their faces, in the lull
Of natural things, looked wonderful
With life and death and deathless
rule.

All, still as stone, and yet intense ;
As if by spirit's vehemence
That stone were carved, and not by
sense.

But where the heart of each should
beat,
There seemed a wound instead of it,
From whence the blood dropped to
their feet.

Drop after drop—dropped heavily,
As century follows century
Into the deep eternity..

Then said the lady—and her word
Came distant,—as wide waves were
stirred
Between her* and the ear that
heard,—

"*World's use* is cold—*world's love* is
vain,—

World's cruelty is bitter bane ;
But pain is not the fruit of pain.

"Hearken, O poet, whom I led
From the dark wood ! Dismissing
dread,
Now hear this angel in my stead.

"His organ's clavier strikes along
These poets' hearts, sonorous, strong,
They gave him without count of
wrong,—

"A diapason whence to guide
Up to God's feet, from these who
died,
An anthem fully glorified.

"Whereat God's blessing . . IBARAK
(יְבָרַךְ)

Breathes back this music—folds it
back

About the earth in vapoury rack :

"And men walk in it, crying 'Lo !
The world is wider, and we know
The very heavens look brighter so.

"The stars move statelier round the
edge

Of the silver spheres, and give in
pledge

Their light for nobler privilege.

"No little flower but joys or
grieves—

Full life is rustling in the sheaves,—

Full spirit sweeps the forest-
leaves.'

"So works this music on the earth ;
God so admits it, sends it forth,
To add another worth to worth—

"A new creation-bloom that rounds
The old creation, and expounds
His Beautiful in tuneful sounds.

"Now hearken !" Then the poet
gazed

Upon the angel glorious-faced,
Whose hand, majestically raised,

Floated across the organ-keys,
Like a pale moon o'er murmuring seas,
With no touch but with influences.

Then rose and fell (with swell and
swound

Of shapeless noises wandering round
A concord which at last they found)

Those mystic keys—the tones were
mixed,

Dim, faint, and thrilled and throbbed
betwixt

The incomplete and the unfixed :

And therein mighty minds were heard
In mighty musings, inly stirred,
And struggling outward for a word.

Until these surges, having run
This way and that, gave out as one
An Aphrodite of sweet tune,—

A Harmony, that, finding vent,
Upward in grand ascension went.
Winged to a heavenly argument—

Up, upward ! like a saint who strips
The shroud back from his eyes and
lips,

And rises in apocalypse.

A harmony sublime and plain,
Which cleft (as flying swan, the rain,—
Throwing the drops off with a strain

Of her white wing) those under-
tones

Of perplexed chords, and soared'at once
And struck out from the starry
thrones

Their several silver octaves as
It passed to God. The music was
Of divine stature—strong to pass.

And those who heard it, understood
Something of life in spirit and blood—
Something of nature's fair and good.

And while it sounded, those great
souls.

Did thrill as racers at the goals,
And burn in all their aureoles.

But she, the lady, as vapour-bound,
Stood calmly in the joy of sound,—
Like Nature with the showers around.

And when it ceased, the blood which
fell,

Again, alone grew audible,
Tolling the silence as a bell.

The sovran angel lifted high
His hand, and spake out sovranly—
“Tried poets, hearken and reply!

“Give me true answers. If we grant
That not to suffer, is to want
The conscience of the jubilant,—

“If ignorance of anguish is
But ignorance,—and mortals miss
Far prospects, by a level bliss,—

“If, as two colours must be viewed
In a visible image, mortals should
Need good and evil, to see good,—

“If to speak nobly, comprehends
To feel profoundly—if the ends
Of power and suffering, Nature
blends,—

“If poets on the tripod must
Writhe like the Pythian, to make just
Their oracles, and merit trust,—

“If every vatic word that sweeps
To change the world, must pale their
lips,

And leave their own souls in eclipse,—

“If to search deep the universe
Must pierce the searcher with the
curse,—

Because that bolt (in man's reverse),

“Was shot to the heart o' the wood,
and lies

Wedged deepest in the best,—if eyes
That look for visions and surprise

“From influent angels, must shut
down

Their lids first, upon sun and moon,
The head asleep upon a stone,—

“If ONE Who did redeem you back,
By His own loss, from final wrack,
Did consecrate by touch and track

“Those temporal sorrows, till the
taste

Of brackish waters of the waste
Is salt with tears He dropt too fast,—

“If all the crowns of earth must
wound

With prickings of the thorns He
found,—

If saddest sighs swell sweetest
sound,—

“What say ye unto this?—refuse
This baptism in salt water?—choose
Calm breasts, mute lips, and labour
loose?

“Or, oh ye gifted givers! ye
Who give your liberal hearts to me,
To make the world this harmony,—

“Are ye resigned that they be spent
To such world's help?”—

The Spirits bent
Their awful brows and said—“Con-
tent.”

Content! it sounded like *Amen*,
Said by a choir of mourning men—
An affirmation full of pain

And patience,—ay, of glorying
And adoration,—as a king
Might seal an oath for governing.

Then said the angel—and his face
Lightened abroad, until the place
Grew larger for a moment's space,—

The long aisles flashing out in light,
And nave and transept, columns white,
And arches crossed, being clear to
sight

As if the roof were off and all
Stood in the noon-sun,—“Lo! I call
To other hearts as liberal.

“This pedal strikes out in the air:
My instrument has room to bear
Still fuller strains and perfecter.

“Herein is room, and shall be room
While Time lasts, for new hearts to
come

Consummating while they consume.

“What living man will bring a gift
Of his own heart, and help to lift
The tune?—The race is to the swift.”

So asked the angel. Straight the
while,

A company came up the aisle
With measured step and sorted
smile,—

Cleaving the incense-clouds that rise,
With winking unaccustomed eyes,
And love-locks smelling sweet of spice.

One bore his head above the rest,
As if the world were dispossessed—
And One did pillow chin on breast,
Right languid—an as he should faint.
One shook his curls across his paint,
And moralised on worldly taint.

One, slanting up his face, did wink
The salt rheum to the eyelid's brink,
To think—O gods! or—not to
think!

Some trod out stealthily and slow,
As if the sun would fall in snow,
If they walked to instead of fro.

And some with conscious ambling
free,

Did shake their bells right daintily
On hand and foot, for harmony.

And some composing sudden sighs
In attitudes of point-device,
Rehearsed impromptu agonies.

And when this company drew near
The spirits crowned, it might appear
Submitted to a ghastly fear.

As a sane eye in master-passion
Constrains a maniac to the fashion
Of hideous maniac imitation.

In the least geste—the dropping low
O'thelid—the wrinkling of the brow,—
Exaggerate with mock and mow,—

So, mastered was that company
By the crowned vision utterly,
Swayed to a maniac mockery.

One dulled his eyeballs, as they ached
With Homer's forehead—though he
lacked

An inch of any. And one racked

His lower lip with restless tooth,—
As Pindar's rushing words forsooth
Were pent behind it. One, his
smooth

Pink cheeks did rumple passionate,
Like Æschylus—and tried to prate
On trolling tongue, of fate and fate.

One set her eyes like Sappho's—or
Any light woman's! one forbore
Like Dante, or any man as poor

In mirth, to let a smile undo
His hard shut lips. And one, that
drew

Sour humours from his mother, blew

His sunken cheeks out to the size
Of most unnatural jollities,
Because Anacreon looked jest-wise.

So with the rest.—It was a sight
A great world-laughter would requite,
Or great world-wrath, with equal
right!

Out came a speaker from that crowd
To speak for all—in sleek and proud
Exordial periods, while he bowed

His knee before the angel.—“ Thus,
O angel, who hast called for us,
We bring thee service emulous,—

“ Fit service from sufficient soul—
Hand-service, to receive world's dole.—
Lip-service, in world's ear to roll

“ Adjusted concords—soft enow
To hear the wine-cups passing, through,
And not too grave to spoil the show.

“ Thou, certes, when thou askest more,
O sapient angel, leanest o'er
The window-sill of metaphor.

“ To give our hearts up! fie!—That
rage
Barbaric antedates the age.
It is not done on any stage.

“ Because your scald or gleeman went
With seven- or nine-stringed instru-
ment

Upon his back—must ours be bent?

“ We are not pilgrims, by your leave:
No, nor yet martyrs! if we grieve,
It is to rhyme to . . . summer eve.

“ And if we labour, it shall be
As suiteth best with our degree,
In after-dinner reverie.”

More yet that speaker would have
said,—

Poising, between his smiles fair-fed,
Each separate phrase till finished.

But all the foreheads of those born
And dead true poets flashed with scorn
Betwixt the bay leaves round them
worn—

Av. jetted such brave fire, that they,
The new-come, shrank and paled away,
Like leaden ashes when the day

Strikes on the hearth. A spirit-blast,
A presence known by power, at last
Took them up mutely—they had
passed.

And *he*, our pilgrim-poet, saw
Only their places, in deep awe,—
What time the angel's smile did draw

His gazing upward. Smiling on,
The angel in the angel shone,
Revealing glory in benison.

Till, ripened in the light which shut
The poet in, his spirit mute
Dropped sudden, as a perfect fruit.

He fell before the angel's feet,
Saying—"If what is true is sweet,
In something I may compass it.

"For, where my worthiness is poor,
My will stands richly at the door,
To pay short-comings evermore.

"Accept me therefore—Not for price,
And not for pride, my sacrifice
Is tendered! for my soul is nice,

"And will beat down those dusty seeds
Of bearded corn, if she succeeds
In soaring while the covey feeds.

"I soar—I am drawn up like the lark
To its white cloud. So high my mark,
Albeit my wing is small and dark.

"I ask no wages—seek no fame.
Sew me, for shroud round face and
name,
God's banner of the oriflamme.

"I only would have leave to loose
(In tears and blood, if so He choose)
Mine inward music out to use,

"I only would be spent—in pain
And loss, perchance—but not in vain,
Upon the sweetness of that strain,—

"Only project, beyond the bound
Of mine own life, so lost and found,
My voice, and live on in its sound,—

"Only embrace and be embraced
By fiery ends,—whereby to waste,
And light God's future with my past."

The angel's smile grew more divine—
The mortal speaking—ay, its shine
Swelled fuller, like a choir-note fine,

Till the broad glory round his brow,
Did vibrate with the light below;
But what he said, I do not know.

Nor know I if the man who prayed,
Rose up accepted, unforbade,
From the church-floor where he was
laid,—

Nor if a listening life did run
Through the king-poets, one by one
Rejoicing in a worthy son.

My soul, which might have seen, grew
blind

By what it looked on: I can find
No certain count of things behind.

I saw alone, dim white and grand
As in a dream, the angel's hand
Stretched forth in gesture of command

Straight through the haze—And so,
as erst,

A strain more noble than the first
Mused in the organ, and outburst.

With giant march, from floor to roof
Rose the full notes,—now parted off
In pauses massively aloof,

Like measured thunders,—now re-
joined

In concords of mysterious kind
Which fused together sense and
mind,—

Now flashing sharp on sharp along
Exultant, in a mounting throng,—
Now dying off to a low song

Fed upon minors!—wavelike sounds
Re-eddying into silver rounds,
Enlarging liberty with bounds.

And every rhythm that seemed to close
Survived in confluent underflows
Symphonious with the next that rose.

Thus the whole strain being multiplied
And greatened,—with its glorified
Wings shot abroad from side to side,—

Waved backward (as a wind might
wave

A Broken mist, and with as brave
Wild roaring) arch and architrave.

Aisle, transept, column, marble wall,—
Then swelling outward, prodigal
Of aspiration beyond thrall,

Soared,—and drew up with it the
whole

Of this said vision—as a soul
Is raised by a thought! And as a roll

Of bright devices is unrolled
Still upward, with a gradual gold,—
So rose the vision manifold,

Angel and organ, and the round
Of spirits, solemnised and crowned,—
While the freed clouds of incense
wound

Ascending, following in their track,
And glimmering faintly, like the rack
O' the moon, in her own light cast
back.

And as that solemn Dream withdrew,
The lady's kiss did fall anew
Cold on the poet's brow as dew.

And that same kiss which bound him
first

Beyond the senses, now reversed
Its own law, and most subtly pierced

His spirit with the sense of things
Sensual and present. Vanishings
Of glory, with Æolian wings

Struck him and passed: the lady's
face

Did melt back in the chrysopras
Of the orient morning sky that was

Yet clear of lark,—and there and so
She melted, as a star might do,
Still smiling as she melted—slow,

Smiling so slow, he seemed to see
Her smile the last thing, gloriously,
Beyond her—far as memory.

Then he looked round: he was alone—
He lay before the breaking sun,
As Jacob at the Bethel stone.

And thought's entangled skein being
wound,

He knew the moorland of his wound,
And the pale pools that seared the
ground,—

The far wood-pines, like offing ships—
The fourth pool's yew anear him
drips

World's cruelty attaints his lips;

And still he tastes it—bitter still—
Through all that glorious possible
He had the sight of present ill!

Yet rising calmly up and slowly
With such a cheer as scorneth folly,
A mild delightsome melancholy,

He journeyed homeward through the
wood,

And prayed along the solitude,
Betwixt the pines,—“O God, my
God!”

The golden morning's open flowings
Did sway the trees to murmurous
bowings,

In metric chant of blessed poems.

And passing homeward through the
wood,

He prayed along the solitude,—
“THOU, Poet-God, art great and
good!

“And though we must have, and
have had

Right reason to be earthly sad,—
THOU, Poet-God, art great and glad.”

CONCLUSION

Life treads on life, and heart on
heart—

We press too close on church and mart,
To keep a dream or grave apart.

And I was 'ware of walking down
That same green forest where had gone
The poet-pilgrim. One by one

I traced his footsteps. From the east
A red and tender radiance pressed
Through the near trees, until I guessed

The sun behind shone full and round;
While up the leafiness profound
A wind scarce old enough for sound

Stood ready to blow on me when
I turned that way; and now and then
The birds sang and brake off again

To shake their pretty feathers dry
Of the dew sliding droppingly
From the leaf-edges, and apply

Back to their song. 'Twixt dew and
bird

So sweet a silence ministered,
God seemed to use it for a word.

Yet morning souls did leap and run
In all things, as the least had won
A joyous insight of the sun.

And no one looking round the wood
Could help confessing, as he stood,
" *This Poet-God is glad and good.*"

But hark! a distant sound that
grows!

A heaving, sinking of the boughs—
A rustling murmur, not of those!

A breezy noise, which is not breeze!
And white-clad children by degrees
Steal out in troops among the trees.

Fair little children, morning-bright,
With faces grave, yet soft to sight,—
Expressive of restrained delight.

Some plucked the palm-boughs within
reach,
And others leapt up high to catch
The upper boughs, and shake from
each

A rain of dew, till, wetted so,
The child who held the branch let go,
And it swang backward with a flow
Of faster drippings. Then I knew
The children laughed—but the laugh
flew

From its own chirrup, as might do
A frightened song-bird; and a child
Who seemed the chief, said very mild,
"Hush! keep this morning undefiled."

His eyes rebuked them from calm
spheres;

His soul upon his brow appears
In waiting for more holy years.

I called the child to me, and said,
"What are your palms for?"—"To
be spread,"

He answered, "on a poet dead.

"The poet died last month; and now
The world which had been somewhat
slow

In honouring his living brow,

"Commands the palms—They must
be strown

On his new marble very soon,
In a procession of the town."

I sighed and said, "Did he foresee
Any such honour?"—"Verily
I cannot tell you," answered he,

"But this I know,—I fain would lay
Mine own head down, another day,
As he did,—with the fame away.

"A lily, a friend's hand had plucked,
Lay by his death-bed, which he looked
As deep down as a bee had sucked,

"Then, turning to the lattice, gazed
O'er hill and river, and upraised
His eyes illumined and amazed

"With the world's beauty, up to God,
Re-offering on his iris broad
The images of things bestowed

"By the chief Poet,—'God!' he
cried,

'Be praised for anguish, which has
tried;

For Beauty, which has satisfied:—

"For this world's presence, half
within
And half without me—sound and
scene—

This sense of Being and Having been.

"I thank Thee that my soul hath
room

For Thy grand world! Both guests
may come—

Beauty, to soul—Body, to tomb!

"I am content to be so weak,—
Put strength into the words I speak,
And I am strong in what I seek.

"I am content to be so bare
Before the archers; everywhere
My wounds being stroked by heavenly
air.

"I laid my soul before Thy feet,
That Images of fair and sweet
Should walk to other men on it.

"I am content to feel the step
Of each pure Image!—let those keep
To mandragore, who care to sleep.

"I am content to touch the brink
Of the other goblet, and I think
My bitter drink a wholesome drink.

"Because my portion was assigned
Wholesome and bitter—Thou art
kind,

And I am blessed to my mind.

"Gifted for giving, I receive
The maythorn, and its scent outgive!
I grieve not that I once did grieve,

"In my large joy of sight and touch
Beyond what others count for such,
I am content to suffer much.

"*I know*—is all the mourner saith,—
Knowledge by suffering entereth;
And Life is perfected by Death."

The child spake nobly. Strange to
hear,
His infantine soft accents clear
Charged with high meanings, did
appear,—

And fair to see, his form and face,—
Winged out with whiteness and pure
grace
From the green darkness of the place.

Behind his head a palm-tree grew:
An orient beam, which pierced it
through,
Transversely on his forehead drew

The figure of a palm-branch brown,
Traced on its brightness up and down
In fine fair lines,—a shadow-crown.

Guido might paint his angels so—
A little angel, taught to go
With holy words to saints below.

Such innocence of action yet
Significance of object met
In his whole bearing strong and sweet.

And all the children, the whole band,
Did round in rosy reverence stand,
Each with a palm-bough in his hand.

"And so he died," I whispered;—

"Nay,
Not so," the childish voice did say—
"That poet turned him, first, to pray

"In silence, and God heard the rest,
Twixt the sun's footsteps down the
west.

Then he called one who loved him
best,

"Yea, he called softly through the
room

(His voice was weak yet tender)—
'Come,'

He said, 'come nearer! Let the
bloom

"Of Life grow over, undenied,
This bridge of Death, which is not
wide—

I shall be soon at the other side.

B.P.

"Come, kiss me! So the one in
truth

Who loved him best—in love, not ruth,
Bowed down and kissed him mouth
to mouth.

"And, in that kiss of Love, was won
Life's manumission. All was done—
The mouth that kissed last, kissed
alone.

"But in the former, confluent kiss,
The same was sealed, I think, by His
To words of truth and uprightness."

The child's voice trembled—his lips
shook
Like a rose leaning o'er a brook,
Which vibrates though it is not
struck.

"And who," I asked, a little moved
Yet curious-eyed, "was this that
loved
And kissed him last, as it behoved?"

"*I*," softly said the child; and then,
"*I*," said he louder, once again.
"*His son*,—my rank is, among men.

"And now that men exalt his name
I come to gather palms with them,
That holy Love may hallow Fame.

"He did not die alone, nor should
His memory live so, 'mid these rude
World-praisers—a worse solitude.

"Me, a voice calleth to that tomb
Where these are strewing branch and
bloom,

Saying, *Come nearer!*—and I come.

"Glory to God!" resumed he,—
And his eyes smiled for victory
O'er their own tears, which I could see

Fallen on the palm, down cheek and
chin—

"That poet now hath entered in
The place of rest which is not sin.

"And while he rests, his songs in
troops

Walk up and down our earthly slopes,
Companioned by diviner Hopes."

"But *thou*," I murmured—to engage
The child's speech farther,—"*hast an
age*

Too tender for this orphanage."

"Glory to God—to God!" he saith—
 "KNOWLEDGE BY SUFFERING EN-
 TERETH;
 AND LIFE IS PERFECTED BY DEATH."

RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY

I

To the belfry, one by one, went the
 ringers from the sun,—
Toll slowly.

And the oldest ringer said, "Ours is
 music for the Dead,
 When the rebecks are all done."

II

Six abeles i' the churchyard grow on
 the north side in a row,
Toll slowly.

And the shadows of their tops, rock
 across the little slopes
 Of the grassy graves below.

III

On the south side and the west, a
 small river runs in haste,—
Toll slowly.

And between the river flowing and
 the fair green trees a-growing,
 Do the dead lie at their rest.

IV

On the east I sate that day, up against
 a willow grey:—
Toll slowly.

Through the rain of willow-branches,
 I could see the low hill-ranges,
 And the river on its way.

V

There I sate beneath the tree, and
 the bell tolled solemnly,—
Toll slowly.

While the trees' and rivers' voices
 flowed between the solemn
 noises,—

Yet death seemed more loud to me.

VI

There, I read this ancient rhyme,
 while the bell did all the time
Toll slowly.

And the solemn knell fell in with the
 tale of life and sin,

Like a rhythmic fate sublime.

THE RHYME

I

Broad the forest stood (I read) on the
 hills of Linteged,—
Toll slowly.

And three hundred years had stood
 mute adown each hoary wood,
 Like a full heart having prayed.

II

And the little birds sang east, and
 the little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly.

And but little thought was theirs
 of the silent antique years,
 In the building of their nest.

III

Down the sun dropt large and red,
 on the towers of Linteged,—
Toll slowly.

Lance and spear upon the height,
 bristling strange in fiery light,
 While the castle stood in shade.

IV

There, the castle stood up black,
 with the red sun at its back,—
Toll slowly.

Like a sullen smouldering pyre, with
 a top that flickers fire
 When the wind is on its track.

V

And five hundred archers tall did be-
 siege the castle wall,—
Toll slowly.

And the castle seethed in blood, four-
 teen days and nights had stood,
 And to-night, anears its fall.

VI

Yet thereunto, blind to doom, three
 months since, a bride did come,—
Toll slowly.

One who proudly trod the floors, and
 softly whispered in the doors,
 "May good angels bless our home."

VII

Oh, a bride of queenly eyes, with a
 front of constancies,—
Toll slowly.

Oh, a bride of cordial mouth,—where
 the untired smile of youth
 Did light outward its own sighs.

VIII

'Twas a Duke's fair orphan-girl, and
 her uncle's ward, the Earl,—
Toll slowly.

Who betrothed her twelve years old,
 for the sake of dowry gold,
 To his son Lord Leigh, the churl.

IX

But what time she had made good
all her years of womanhood,—
Toll slowly.

Unto both those Lords of Leigh, spake
she out right sovrainly,
"My will runneth as my blood.

X

"And while this same blood makes
red this same right hand's veins,"
she said,—
Toll slowly.

"'Tis my will, as lady free, not to
wed a Lord of Leigh,
But Sir Guy of Linteged."

XI

The old Earl he smiled smooth, then
he sighed for wilful youth,—
Toll slowly.

"Good my niece, that hand withal,
looketh somewhat soft and small
For so large a will, in sooth."

XII

She, too, smiled by that same sign—
but her smile was cold and fine,—
Toll slowly.

"Little hand clasps muckle gold,
or it were not worth the hold
Of thy son, good uncle mine!"

XIII

Then the young Lord jerked his
breath, and sware thickly in his
teeth,—
Toll slowly.

"He would wed his own betrothed,
an she loved him an she loathed,
Let the life come or the death."

XIV

Up she rose with scornful eyes, as her
father's child might rise,—
Toll slowly.

"Thy hound's blood, my Lord of
Leigh, stains thy knightly heel,"
quoth she,
"And he moans not where he lies.

XV

"But a woman's will dies hard, in the
hall or on the sward!"—
Toll slowly.

"By that grave, my lords, which
made me orphaned girl and
dowered lady,
I deny you wife and ward."

XVI

Unto each she bowed her head, and
swept past with lofty tread.
Toll slowly.

Ere the midnight-bell had ceased, in
the chapel had the priest
Blessed her, bride of Linteged.

XVII

Fast and fain the bridal train along
the night-storm rode amain:—
Toll slowly.

Hard the steeds of lord and serf
struck their hoofs out on the turf,
In the pauses of the rain.

XVIII

Fast and fain the kinsmen's train
along the storm pursued amain—
Toll slowly.

Steed on steed-track, dashing off—
thickening, doubling, hoof on
hoof,
In the pauses of the rain.

XIX

And the bridegroom led the flight
on his red-roan steed of might,—
Toll slowly.

And the bride lay on his arm, still, as
if she feared no harm,
Smiling out into the night.

XX

"Dost thou fear?" he said at last;—
—"Nay!" she answered him
in haste,—
Toll slowly.

"Not such death as we could find—
only life with one behind—
Ride on fast as fear—ride fast!"

XXI

Up the mountain wheeled the steed
—girth to ground, and fetlocks
spread,—
Toll slowly.

Headlong bounds, and rocking flanks,
—down he staggered—down the
banks,
To the towers of Linteged.

XXII

High and low the serfs looked out,
red the flambeaus tossed about,—
Toll slowly.

In the courtyard rose the cry—
"Live the Duchess and Sir
Guy!"
But she never heard them shout.

XXIII

On the steed she dropt her cheek,
kissed his mane and kissed his
neck,—

Toll slowly.

"I had happier died by thee, than
lived on a Lady Leigh,"
Were the words which she did
speak.

XXIV

But a three months' joyaunce lay
'twixt that moment and to-day,—

Toll slowly.

When five hundred archers tall
stand beside the castle wall,
To recapture Duchess May.

XXV

And the castle standeth black, with
the red sun at its back,—

Toll slowly.

And a fortnight's siege is done—and,
except the Duchess, none
Can misdoubt the coming wrack.

XXVI

Then the captain, young Lord Leigh,
with his eyes so grey of blec,—

Toll slowly.

And thin lips that scarcely sheathe
the cold white gnashing of his
teeth
Gnashed in smiling, absently,—

XXVII

Cried aloud—"Sogoes the day, bride-
groom fair of Duchess May!"—

Toll slowly.

"Look thy last upon that sun. If
thou seest to-morrow's one,
'Twill be through a foot of clay.

XXVIII

"Ha, fair bride! Dost hear no
sound, save that moaning of the
hound?"—

Toll slowly.

"Thou and I have parted troth,—
yet I keep my vengeance-oath,
And the other may come round.

XXIX

"Ha! thy will is brave to dare, and
thy new love past compare,"—

Toll slowly.

"Yet thine old love's falchion brave
is as strong a thing to have,
As the will of lady fair.

XXX

"Peck on blindly, netted dove!—If
a wife's name thee behove,"—

Toll slowly.

"Thou shalt wear the same to-mor-
row, ere the grave has hid the
sorrow
Of thy last ill-mated love.

XXXI

"O'er his fixed and silent mouth,
thou and I will call back troth,"—

Toll slowly.

"He shall altar be and priest,—and
he will not cry at least
'I forbid you—I am loth!'

XXXII

"I will wring thy fingers pale, in the
gauntlet of my mail,"—

Toll slowly.

"'Little hand and muckle gold' close
shall lie within my hold,
As the sword did, to prevail."

XXXIII

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the
little birds sang west,—

Toll slowly.

Oh, and laughed the Duchess May,
and her soul did put away
All his boasting, for a jest.

XXXIV

In her chamber did she sit, laughing
low to think of it,—

Toll slowly.

"Tower is strong and will is free—
thou canst boast, my Lord of
Leigh,—
But thou boastest little wit."

XXXV

In her tire-glass gazed she, and she
blushed right womanly,—

Toll slowly.

She blushed half from her disdain—
half, her beauty was so plain,
—"Oath for oath, my Lord of
Leigh!"

XXXVI

Straight she called her maidens in—
"Since ye gave me blame here-
in,"—

Toll slowly.

"That a bridal such as mine should
lack gauds to make it fine,
Come and shrive me from that sin.

XXXVII

"It is three months gone to-day, since
I gave mine hand away :"—

Toll slowly.

"Bring the gold and bring the gem,
we will keep bridle-state in them,
While we keep the foe at bay.

XXXVIII

"On your arms I loose mine hair ;—
comb it smooth and crown it
fair,"—

Toll slowly.

"I would look in purple pall from
this lattice down the wall,
And throw scorn to one that's
there !"

XXXIX

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the
little birds sang west,—

Toll slowly.

On the tower the castle's lord leant
in silence on his sword,
With an anguish in his breast.

XL

With a spirit-laden weight, did he
lean down passionate,—

Toll slowly.

They have almost sapped the wall,—
they will enter therewithal,
With no knocking at the gate.

XLI

Then the sword he leant upon,
shivered—snapped upon the
stone,—

Toll slowly.

"Sword," he thought, with inward
laugh, "ill thou servest for a
staff

When thy nobler use is done !

XLII

"Sword, thy nobler use is done !—
tower is lost, and shame
begun :"—

Toll slowly.

"If we met them in the breach, hilt
to hilt or speech to speech,
We should die there, each for one.

XLIII

"If we met them at the wall, we
should singly, vainly fall,"—

Toll slowly.

"But if I die here alone,—then I
die, who am but one,
And die nobly for them all.

XLIV

"Five true friends lie for my sake—
in the moat and in the brake,"—

Toll slowly.

"Thirteen warriors lie at rest, with
a black wound in the breast,
And not one of these will wake.

XLV

"And no more of this shall be!—heart-
blood weighs too heavily,"—

Toll slowly.

"And I could not sleep in grave, with
the faithful and the brave
Heaped around and over me.

XLVI

"Since young Clare a mother hath,
and young Ralph a plighted
faith,"—

Toll slowly.

"Since my pale young sister's cheeks
blush like rose when Ronald
speaks,
Albeit never a word she saith—

XLVII

"These shall never die for me—life-
blood falls too heavily :"—

Toll slowly.

"And if I die here apart,—o'er my
dead and silent heart
They shall pass out safe and free.

XLVIII

"When the foe hath heard it said—
'Death holds Guy of Linteged,'"—

Toll slowly.

"That new corse new peace shall
bring, and a blessed, blessed
thing
Shall the stone be at its head.

XLIX

"Then my friends shall pass out free,
and shall bear my memory,"—

Toll slowly.

"Then my foes shall sleek their pride,
soothing fair my widowed bride
Whose sole sin was love of me.

L

"With their words all smooth and
sweet, they will front her and
entreat,"—

Toll slowly.

"And their purple pall will spread
underneath her fainting head,
While her tears drop over it.

LI

"She will weep her woman's tears,
she will pray her woman's
prayers,"—

Toll slowly.

"But her heart is young in pain, and
her hopes will spring again
By the suntime of her years.

LII

"Ah, sweet May—ah, sweetest grief!
—once I vowed thee my belief,"—

Toll slowly.

"That thy name expressed thy
sweetness,—May of poets, in
completeness!
Now my May-day seemeth brief."

LIII

All these silent thoughts did swim
o'er his eyes grown strange and
dim,—

Toll slowly.

"Till his true men in the place wished
they stood there face to face
With the foe instead of him.

LIV

"One last oath, my friends that
wear faithful hearts to do and
dare!"

Toll slowly.

"Tower must fall, and bride be lost!
—swear me service, worth the
cost,"
—Bold they stood around to
swear.

LV

"Each man clasp my hand and
swear, by the deed we failed in
there,"—

Toll slowly.

"Not for vengeance, not for right, will
ye strike one blow to-night!"—
Pale they stood around—to swear.

LVI

"One last boon, young Ralph and
Clare! faithful hearts to do and
dare!"

Toll slowly.

"Bring that steed up from his stall,
which she kissed before you all,—
Guide him up the turret-stair.

LVII

"Ye shall harness him aright, and
lead upward to this height!"—

Toll slowly.

"Once in love and twice in war, hath
he borne me strong and far,
He shall bear me far to-night."

LVIII

Then his men looked to and fro,
when they heard him speaking
so,—

Toll slowly.

—"Las! the noble heart," they
thought,—"he in sooth is grief-
distraught.

Would we stood here with the foe!"

LIX

But a fire flashed from his eye, 'twixt
their thought and their reply,—
Toll slowly.

"Have ye so much time to waste?
We who ride here, must ride fast,
As we wish our foes to fly."

LX

They have fetched the steed with care,
in the harness he did wear,—

Toll slowly.

Past the court and through the doors,
across the rushes of the floors;
But they goad him up the stair.

LXI

Then from out her bower chambère,
did the Duchess May repair,—

Toll slowly.

"Tell me now what is your need,"
said the lady, "of this steed,
That ye goad him up the stair?"

LXII

Calm she stood! unbodkined through,
fell her dark hair to her shoe,—

Toll slowly.

And the smile upon her face, ere she
left the tiring-glass,
Had not time enough to go.

LXIII

"Get thee back, sweet Duchess May!
hope is gone like yesterday,"—

Toll slowly.

"One half-hour completes the breach;
and thy lord grows wild of
speech.—

Get thee in, sweet lady, and pray.

LXIV

"In the east tower, high'st of all,—
loud he cries forsteed from stall,"—

Toll slowly.

"He would ride as far," quoth he,
'as for love and victory,
Though he rides the castle-wall."

LXV

"And we fetch the steed from stall,
upwhere never a hoof did fall."—

Toll slowly.

"Wifely prayer meets deathly need !
may the sweet Heavens hear thee
plead,
If he rides the castle-wall."

LXVI

Low she dropt her head, and lower,
till her hair coiled on the floor,—

Toll slowly.

And tear after tear you heard, fall
distinct as any word
Which you might be listening
for.

LXVII

"Get thee in, thou soft ladye !—
here, is never a place for thee!"

Toll slowly.

"Braid thine hair and clasp thy
gown, that thy beauty in its
moan

May find grace with Leigh of
Leigh."

LXVIII

She stood up in bitter case, with a
pale yet steady face,—

Toll slowly.

Like a statue thunderstruck, which
though quivering seems to look
Right against the thunder-place.

LXIX

And her foot trod in, with pride, her
own tears i' the stone beside,—

Toll slowly.

"Go to, faithful friends, go to !—
Judge no more what ladies do,—
No, nor how their lords may ride!"

LXX

Then the good steed's rein she took,
and his neck did kiss and
stroke:—

Toll slowly.

Soft he neighed to answer her, and
then followed up the stair,
For the love of her sweet look.

LXXI

Oh, and steeply, steeply wound up
the narrow stair around,—

Toll slowly.

Oh, and closely, closely speeding,
stepbystep beside her treading,—
Did he follow, meek as hound.

LXXII

On the east tower, high'st of all,—
there, where never a hoof did
fall,—

Toll slowly.

Out they swept, a vision steady,—
noble steed and lovely lady,
Calm as if in bower or stall.

LXXIII

Down she knelt at her lord's knee,
and she looked up silently,—

Toll slowly.

And he kissed her twice and thrice,
for that look within her eyes
Which he could not bear to see.

LXXIV

Quoth he, "Get thee from this
strife,—and the sweet saints
bless thy life!" —

Toll slowly.

"In this hour, I stand in need of
my noble red-roan steed—
But no more of my noble wife."

LXXV

Quoth she, "Meekly have I done all
thy biddings under sun :"—

Toll slowly.

"But by all my womanhood, which
is proved so, true and good,
I will never do this one.

LXXVI

"Now, by womanhood's degree, and
by wifehood's verity,"—

Toll slowly.

"In this hour if thou hast need of
thy noble red-roan steed,
Thou hast also need of me.

LXXVII

"By this golden ring ye see on this
lifted hand, pardie,"—

Toll slowly.

"If, this hour, on castle wall, can be
room for steed from stall,
Shall be also room for me.

LXXVIII

"So the sweet saints with me be,"
(did she utter solemnly),—

Toll slowly.

'If a man, this eventide, on this
castle wall will ride,
He shall ride the same with me."

LXXIX

Oh, he sprang up in the selle, and he
laughed out bitter-well,—

Toll slowly.

"Wouldst thou ride among the
leaves, as we used on other eves,
To hear chime a vesper-bell?"

LXXX

She clang closer to his knee—"Ay,
beneath the cypress-tree!"—

Toll slowly.

"Mock me not, for otherwhere, than
along the greenwood fair,
Have I ridden fast with thee!"

LXXXI

"Fast I rode, with new-made vows,
from my angry kinsman's house!"

Toll slowly.

"What! and would you men should
reck, that I dared more for love's
sake

As a bride than as a spouse?"

LXXXII

"What, and would you it should fall,
as a proverb, before all,"—

Toll slowly.

"That a bride may keep your side
while through castle-gate you
ride,
Yet eschew the castle wall?"

LXXXIII

Ho! the breach yawns into ruin, and
roars up against her suing,—

Toll slowly.

With the inarticulate din, and the
dreadful falling in—
Shrieks of doing and undoing!

LXXXIV

Twice he wrung her hands in twain,
but the small hands closed
again,—

Toll slowly.

Back he reined the steed—back,
back! but she trailed along his
track,

With a frantic clasp and strain.

LXXXV

Evermore the foemen pour through
the crash of window and door,—

Toll slowly.

And the shouts of "Leigh" and
"Leigh," and the shrieks of
"kill!" and "flee!"

Strike up clear amid the roar.

LXXXVI

Thrice he wrung her hands in twain,
—but they closed and clung
again,—

Toll slowly.

Wild she clung, as one, withstood,
clasps a Christ upon the rood,
In a spasm of deathly pain.

LXXXVII

She clung wild and she clung mute,—
with her shuddering lips half-
shut,—

Toll slowly.

Her head fallen as in swoond,—hair
and knee swept on the ground,—
She clung wild to stirrup and foot.

LXXXVIII

Back he reined his steed, back-thrown
on the slippery coping-stone,—

Toll slowly.

Back the iron hoofs did grind on the
battlement behind
Whence a hundred feet went down.

LXXXIX

And his heel did press and goad on
the quivering flank bestrode,

Toll slowly.

"Friends, and brothers! save my
wife!—Pardon, sweet, in change
for life,—
But I ride alone to God."

XC

Straight as if the Holy Name had up-
breathed her like a flame,—

Toll slowly.

She upsprang, she rose upright,—in
his selle she sate in sight;
By her love she overcame.

XCI

And her head was on his breast, where
she smiled as one at rest,—

Toll slowly.

"Ring," she cried, "O vesper-bell, in
the beechwood's old chapelle!
But the passing-bell rings best."

XCII

They have caught out at the rein,
which Sir Guy threw loose—in
vain,—

Toll slowly.

For the horse in stark despair, with
his front hoofs poised in air,
On the last verge rears amain.

XCIII

And he hangs, he rocks between—
and his nostrils curdle in,—
Toll slowly.

And he shivers head and hoof—and
the flakes of foam fall off;
And his face grows fierce and thin!

XCIV

And a look of human woe, from his
staring eyes did go,—
Toll slowly.

And a sharp cry uttered he, in a fore-
told agony
Of the headlong death below,—

xcv

And, "Ring, ring, thou passing-
bell," still she cried, "i' the old
chappelle!"—
Toll slowly.

Then back-toppling, crashing back—
a dead weight flung out to wrack,
Horse and riders overfell.

* * *

I

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the
little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly.

And I read this ancient Rhyme, in
the churchyard, while the chime
Slowly tolled for one at rest.

II

The abeles moved in the sun, and the
river smooth did run,—
Toll slowly.

And the ancient Rhyme rang strange,
with its passion and its change,
Here, where all done lay undone.

III

And beneath a willow-tree, I a little
grave did see,—
Toll slowly.

Where was graved,—**"HERE UNDE-
FILED, LIETH MAUD, A THREE-
YEAR CHILD,
EIGHTEEN HUNDRED FORTY-
THREE."**

IV

Then, O Spirits—did I say—ye who
rode so fast that day,—
Toll slowly.

Did star-wheels and angel-wings,
with their holy winnowings,
Keep beside you all the way?

V

Though in passion ye would dash,
with a blind and heavy crash,—
Toll slowly.

Up against the thick-bossed shield of
God's judgment in the field,—
Though your heart and brain were
rash,—

VI

Now, your will is all unwilling—now,
your pulses are all stilled,—
Toll slowly.

Now, ye lie as meek and mild (whereso
laid) as Maud the child,
Whose small grave was lately filled.

VII

Beating heart and burning brow, ye
are very patient now,—
Toll slowly.

And the children might be bold to
pluck the kingcups from your
mould
Ere a month had let them grow.

VIII

And you let the goldfinch sing in the
alder near in spring,—
Toll slowly.

Let her build her nest and sit all the
three weeks out on it,
Murmuring not at anything.

IX

In your patience ye are strong; cold
and heat ye take not wrong:—
Toll slowly.

When the trumpet of the angel blows
eternity's evangel,
Time will seem to you not long.

X

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the
little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly.

And I said in underbreath,—All our
life is mixed with death,
And who knoweth which is best?

XI

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the
little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly.

And I smiled to think God's greatness
flowed around our incompleteness,—
Round our restlessness, His rest.

THE LADY'S YES

"Yes," I answered you last night,
 "No," this morning, Sir, I say.
 Colours seen by candle-light,
 Will not look the same by day.
 When the viols played their best,
 Lamps above, and laughs below—
Love me sounded like a jest,
 Fit for *Yes* or fit for *No*.

Call me false or call me free—
 Vow, whatever light may shine,
 No man on your face shall see
 Any grief for change on mine.

Yet the sin is on us both—
 Time to dance is not to woo—
 Wooer light makes fickle troth,
 Scorn of *me* recoils on *you*.

Learn to win a lady's faith
 Nobly, as the thing is high ;
 Bravely, as for life and death—
 With a loyal gravity.

Lead her from the festive boards,
 Point her to the starry skies,
 Guard her, by your truthful words,
 Pure from courtship's flatteries.

By your truth she shall be true—
 Ever true, as wives of yore—
 And her *Yes*, once said to you,
 SHALL be *Yes* for evermore.

THE POET AND THE BIRD

A FABLE

I

SAID a people to a poet—"Go out
 from among us straightway !
 While we are thinking earthly
 things, thou singest of divine :
 There's a little fair brown nightingale,
 who, sitting in the gateway,
 Makes fitter music to our ear than
 any song of thine !"

II

The poet went out weeping—the
 nightingale ceased chanting ;
 "Now, wherefore, O thou nightin-
 gale, is all thy sweetness done ?"
 —"I cannot sing my earthly things,
 the heavenly poet wanting,
 Whose highest harmony includes
 the lowest under sun."

III

The poet went out weeping,—and
 died abroad, bereft there—
 The bird flew to his grave and died
 amid a thousand wails ;—
 And, when I last came by the place, I
 swear the music left there
 Was only of the poet's song, and
 not the nightingale's.

THE LOST BOWER

I

IN the pleasant orchard closes,
 "God bless all our gains," say
 we ;
 But "May God bless all our
 losses,"
 Better suits with our degree.—
 Listen, gentle—ay, and simple !
 Listen, children on the knee !

II

Green the land is where my daily
 Steps in jocund childhood
 played—
 Dimpled close with hill and
 valley,
 Dappled very close with shade ;
 Summer-snow of apple blossoms, run-
 ning up from glade to glade.

III

There is one hill I see nearer
 In my vision of the rest ;
 And a little wood seems clearer,
 As it climbeth from the west,
 Sideway from the tree-locked valley,
 to the airy upland crest.

IV

Small the wood is, green with
 hazels,
 And, completing the ascent,
 Where the wind blows and sun
 dazzles,
 Thrills in leafy tremblement,
 Like a heart that, after climbing,
 beateth quickly through con-
 tent.

V

Not a step the wood advances
 O'er the open hill-top's bound :
 There, in green arrest, the
 branches
 See their image on the ground :
 You may walk beneath them smiling,
 glad with sight and glad with
 sound.

VI

For you hearken on your right
hand,
How the birds do leap and call
In the greenwood, out of sight
and
Out of reach and fear of all ;
And the squirrels crack the filberts
through their cheerful madri-
gal.

VII

On your left, the sheep are
cropping
The slant grass and daisies pale ;
And five apple-trees stand drop-
ping
Separate shadows toward the
vale,
Over which, in choral silence, the
hills look you their " All
hail ! "

VIII

Far out, kindled by each other,
Shining hills on hills arise,
Close as brother leans to brother
When they press beneath the
eyes
Of some father praying blessings from
the gifts of paradise.

IX

While beyond, above them
mounted,
And above their woods alsò,
Malvern hills, for mountains
counted
Not unduly, loom a-row—
Keepers of Piers Plowman's visions,
through the sunshine and the
snow.¹

X

Yet, in childhood, little prized I
That fair walk and far survey :
Twas a straight walk unadvised
by
The least mischief worth a nay—
Up and down—as dull as grammar on
the eve of holiday.

XI

But the wood, all close and
clenching
Bough in bough and root in root,—
No more sky (for over-branching)

¹ The Malvern Hills of Worcestershire are the scene of Langland's visions, and thus present the earliest classic ground of English poetry.

At your head than at your foot,—
Oh, the wood drew me within it, by a
glamour past dispute.

XII

Few and broken paths showed
through it,
Where the sheep had tried to
run,—
Forced, with snowy wool, to strew
it
Round the thickets, when anon
They, with silly thorn-pricked noses,
bleated back into the sun.

XIII

But my childish heart beat
stronger
Than those thickets dare to grow :
I could pierce them ! I could
longer
Travel on, methought, than so.
Sheep for sheep-paths ! braver chil-
dren climb and creep where
they would go.

XIV

And the poets wander, said I,
Over places all as rude !
Bold Rinaldo's lovely lady
Sate to meet him in a wood—
Rosalinda, like a fountain, laughed
out pure with solitude.

XV

And if Chaucer had not travelled
Through a forest by a well,
He had never dreamt nor mar-
velled
At those ladies fair and fell
Who lived smiling without loving, in
their island-citadel.

XVI

Thus I thought of the old singers,
And took courage from their
song,
Till my little struggling fingers
Tore asunder gyve and thong
Of the brambles which entrapped me
and the barrier branches
strong.

XVII

On a day, such pastime keeping,
With a fawn's heart debonair,
Under-crawling, overleaping
Thorns that prick and boughs
that bear,
I stood suddenly astonished—I was
gladdened unaware.

XVIII

From the place I stood in,
floated
Back the covert dim and close,
And the open ground was coated
Carpet-smooth with grass and
moss,
And the blue-bell's purple presence
signed it worthily across.

XIX

Here a linden-tree stood, bright-
ening
All adown its silver rind,
For as some trees draw the light-
ning,
So this tree, unto my mind,
Drew to earth the blessed sunshine
from the sky where it was
shrined.

XX

Tall the linden-tree, and near it
An old hawthorn also grew ;
And wood-ivy like a spirit
Hovered dimly round the two,
Shaping thence that Bower of beauty
which I sing of thus to you.

XXI

'Twas a bower for garden fitter
Than for any woodland wide.
Though a fresh and dewy glitter
Struck it through from side to
side,
Shaped and shaven was the freshness,
as by garden-cunning plied.

XXII

Oh, a lady might have come there,
Hooded fairly like her hawk,
With a book or lute in summer,
And a hope of sweeter talk,—
Listening less to her own music than
for footsteps on the walk.

XXIII

But that bower appeared a
marvel
In the wildness of the place !
With such seeming art and
travail,
Finely fixed and fitted was
Leaf to leaf, the dark-green ivy, to the
summit from the base.

XXIV

And the ivy, veined and glossy,
Was enwrought with eglantine ;
And the wild hop fibred closely,

And the large-leaved columbine,
Arch of door and window mullion, did
right sylvanly entwine.

XXV

Rose-trees either side the door
were
Growing lithe and growing tall,
Each one set a summer warder
For the keeping of the hall,—
With a red rose and a white rose,
leaning, nodding at the wall.

XXVI

As I entered—mosses hushing
Stole all noises from my foot ;
And a green elastic cushion,
Clasped within the linden's root,
Took me in a chair of silence very
rare and absolute.

XXVII

All the floor was paved with
glory,—
Greenly, silently inlaid,
Through quick motions made be-
fore me
With fair counterparts in shade
Of the fair serrated ivy-leaves which
slanted overhead.

XXVIII

" Is such pavement in a palace?"
So I questioned in my thought :
The sun, shining through the
chalice
Of the red rose hung without,
Threw within a red libation, like an
answer to my doubt.

XXIX

At the same time, on the linen
Of my childish lap there fell
Two white may-leaves, down-
ward winning
Through the ceiling's miracle,
From a blossom, like an angel, out of
sight yet blessing well.

XXX

Down to floor and up to ceiling
Quick I turned my childish face,
With an innocent appealing
For the secret of the place,
To the trees, which surely knew it
in partaking of the grace.

XXXI

Where's no foot of human crea-
ture,
How could reach a human hand ?

And if this be work of nature,
Why is nature sudden bland,
Breaking off from other wild work ?
It was hard to understand.

XXXII

Was she weary of rough-doing,
Of the bramble and the thorn ?
Did she pause in tender rueing,
Here, of all her sylvan scorn ?
Or, in mock of art's deceiving, was
the sudden mildness worn ?

XXXIII

Or could this same bower (I
fancied)
Be the work of Dryad strong,
Who, surviving all that chanced
In the world's old pagan wrong,
Lay hid, feeding in the woodland, on
the last true poet's song ?

XXXIV

Or was this the house of fairies,
Left, because of the rough ways,
Unassoiled by Ave Marys
Which the passing pilgrim
prays,
And beyond St. Catherine's chiming
on the blessed Sabbath days ?

XXXV

So, young muser, I sate listening
To my fancy's wildest word—
On a sudden, through the glisten-
ing
Leaves around, a little stirred,
Came a sound, a sense of music, which
was rather felt than heard.

XXXVI

Softly, finely, it inwound me—
From the world it shut me in,—
Like a fountain, falling round me,
Which with silver waters thin
Clips a little marble Naiad sitting
smilingly within.

XXXVII

Whence the music came, who
knoweth ?
I know nothing. But indeed
Pan or Faunus never bloweth
So much sweetness from a reed
Which has sucked the milk of waters,
at the oldest riverhead.

XXXVIII

Never lark the sun can waken
With such sweetness ! when the
lark,

The high planets overtaking
In the half-evanished Dark,
Casts his singing to their singing, like
an arrow to the mark.

XXXIX

Never nightingale so singeth—
Oh ! she leans on thorny tree,
And her poet-soul she flingeth
Over pain to victory !
Yet she never sings such music,—or
she sings it not to me.

XL

Never blackbirds, never thrushes,
Nor small finches sing as sweet,
When the sun strikes through
the bushes,
To their crimson clinging feet,
And their pretty eyes look sideways
to the summer heavens com-
plete.

XLI

If it *were* a bird, it seemèd
Most like Chaucer's, which, in
sooth,
He of green and azure dreamèd,
While it sate in spirit-ruth
On that bier of a crowned lady, sing-
ing nigh her silent mouth.

XLII

If it *were* a bird !—ah, sceptic,
Give me "Yea" or give me
"Nay"—

Though my soul were nympho-
leptic,

As I heard that virèlay,
You may stoop your pride to pardon,
for my sin is far away.

XLIII

I rose up in exaltation
And an inward trembling heat,
And (it seemed) in geste of pas-
sion

Dropped the music to my feet,
Like a garment rustling downwards !
—such a silence followed it.

XLIV

Heart and head beat through the
quiet

Full and heavily, though slower.
In the song, I think, and by it,
Mystic Presences of power

Had up-snatched me to the Timeless,
then returned me to the Hour.

XLV

In a child-abstraction lifted,
 Straightway from the bower I
 past ;
 Foot and soul being dimly drifted
 Through the greenwood, till, at
 last,
 In the hill-top's open sunshine I all
 consciously was cast.

XLVI

Face to face with the true moun-
 tains,
 I stood silently and still,
 Drawing strength from fancy's
 dauntings,
 From the air about the hill,
 And from Nature's open mercies, and
 most debonair goodwill.

XLVII

Oh ! the golden-hearted daisies
 Witnessed there, before my
 youth,
 To the truth of things, with
 praises
 Of the beauty of the truth ;
 And I woke to Nature's real, laughing
 joyfully for both.

XLVIII

And I said within me laughing,
 I have found a bower to-day,
 A green lusus—fashioned half in
 Chance, and half in Nature's
 play—
 And a little bird sings nigh it, I will
 nevermore missay.

XLIX

Henceforth, I will be the fairy
 Of this bower, not built by one ;
 I will go there, sad or merry,
 With each morning's benison,
 And the bird shall be my harper in the
 dream-hall I have won.

L

So I said. But the next morning,
 (—Child, look up into my face—
 'Ware, oh sceptic, of your scorn-
 ing !
 This is truth in its pure grace ;)
 The next morning, all had vanished,
 or my wandering missed the
 place.

LI

Bring an oath most sylvan holy,
 And upon it swear me true—

By the wind-bells swinging slowly
 Their mute curfews in the dew—
 By the advent of the snowdrop—by
 the rosemary and rue,—

LII

I affirm by all or any,
 Let the cause be charm or chance,
 That my wandering searches
 many
 Missed the bower of my ro-
 mance—
 That I nevermore, upon it, turned
 my mortal countenance.

LIII

I affirm that, since I lost it,
 Never bower has seemed so fair—
 Never garden-creeper crossed it,
 With so deft and brave an air—
 Never bird sung in the summer, as I
 saw and heard them there.

LIV

Day by day, with new desire,
 Toward my wood I ran in faith—
 Under leaf and over brier—
 Through the thickets, out of
 breath—
 Like the prince who rescued Beauty
 from the sleep as long as death.

LV

But his sword of mettle clashed,
 And his arm smote strong, I
 ween ;
 And her dreaming spirit flashed
 Through her body's fair white
 screen,—
 And the light thereof might guide him
 up the cedar alleys green.

LVI

But for me, I saw no splendour—
 All my sword was my child-
 heart ;
 And the wood refused surrender
 Of that bower it held apart,
 Safe as Oedipus's grave-place, 'mid
 Colone's olives swart.

LVII

As Aladdin sought the basements
 His fair palace rose upon,
 And the four-and-twenty case-
 ments
 Which gave answers to the sun ;
 So, in wilderment of gazing, I looked
 up, and I looked down.

LVIII

Years have vanished since, as
wholly

As the little bower did then ;
And you call it tender folly
That such thoughts should come
again ?

Ah ! I cannot change this sighing for
your smiling, brother-men !

LIX

For this loss it did prefigure
Other loss of better good,
When my soul, in spirit-vigour,
And in ripened womanhood,
Fell from visions of more beauty than
an arbour in a wood.

LX

I have lost—oh, many a pleasure—

Many a hope, and many a power—
Studious health and merry
leisure—

The first dew on the first flower !
But the first of all my losses was the
losing of the bower.

LXI

I have lost the dream of Doing,
And the other dream of Done—
The first spring in the pursuing,
The first pride in the Begun,—
First recoil from incompleteness, in the
face of what is won,—

LXII

Exaltations in the far light
Where some cottage only is—
Mild dejections in the starlight,
Which the sadder-hearted miss ;
And the child-cheek blushing scarlet
for the very shame of bliss.

LXIII

I have lost the sound child-sleep-
ing
Which the thunder could not
break ;
Something too of the strong
leaping
Of the staglike heart awake,
Which the pale is low for keeping in
the road it ought to take.

LXIV

Some respect to social fictions
Has been also lost by me ;
And some generous genuflexions,
Which my spirit offered free

To the pleasant old conventions of
our false humanity.

LXV

All my losses did I tell you,
Ye, perchance, would look
away ;—

Ye would answer me, " Farewell !
you

Make sad company to-day,
And your tears are falling faster than
the bitter words you say."

LXVI

For God placed me like a dial
In the open ground with power,
And my heart had for its trial,
All the sun and all the shower !
And I suffered many losses ; and my
first was of the bower.

LXVII

Laugh you ? If that loss of
mine be

Of no heavy-seeming weight—
When the cone falls from the
pine-tree,

The young children laugh thereat ;
Yet the wind that struck it, riseth,
and the tempest shall be great.

LXVIII

One who knew me in my child-
hood

In the glamour and the game,
Looking on me long and mild,
would

Never know me for the same.
Come, unchanging recollections, where
those changes overcame.

LXIX

On this couch I weakly lie on,
While I count my memories,—
Through the fingers which, still
sighing,

I press closely on mine eyes,—
Clear as once beneath the sunshine, I
behold the bower arise.

LXX

Springs the linden-tree as greenly,
Stroked with light adown its
rind—

And the ivy-leaves serenely
Each in either intertwined ;

And the rose-trees at the doorway,
they have neither grown nor
pined.

LXXI

From those overblown faint
roses,
Not a leaf appeareth shed,
And that little bud discloses
Not a thorn's-breadth more of
red,
For the winters and the summers
which have passed me over-
head.

LXXII

And that music overfloweth,
Sudden sweet, the sylvan eaves ;
Thrush or nightingale—who
knoweth ?
Fay or Faunus—who believes ?
But my heart still trembles in me, to
the trembling of the leaves.

LXXIII

Is the bower lost, then ? Who
sayeth
That the bower indeed is lost ?
Hark ! my spirit in it prayeth
Through the sunshine and the
frost,—
And the prayer preserves it greenly,
to the last and uttermost—

LXXIV

Till another open for me
In God's Eden-land unknown,
With an angel at the doorway,
White with gazing at His
Throne,
And a saint's voice in the palm-trees,
singing—"ALL IS LOST . . . and
won !"

A CHILD ASLEEP

I

How he sleepeth ! having
drunken
Weary childhood's mandra-
gore !
From its pretty eyes have
sunk
Pleasures, to make room for
more—
Sleeping near the wither'd nosegay,
which he pulled the day
before.

II

Nosegays ! leave them for the
waking :

Throw them earthward where
they grew.

Dim are such, beside the break-
ing
Amaranth he looks unto—
Folded eyes see brighter colours than
the open ever do.

III

Heaven-flowers, rayed by sha-
dows golden
From the paths they sprang
beneath,
Now perhaps divinely holden,
Swing against him in a wreath—
We may think so from the quickening
of his bloom and of his
breath.

IV

Vision unto vision calleth,
While the young child dream-
eth on.
Fair, O dreamer, thee befalleth
With the glory thou hast won !
Darker wert thou in the garden yes-
termorn by summer sun.

V

We should see the spirits ringing
Round thee,—were the clouds
away.
'Tis the child heart draws them,
singing
In the silent-seeming clay—
Singing !—Stars that seem the mut-
est, go in music all the way.

VI

As the moths around a taper,
As the bees around a rose,
As the gnats around a vapour,—
So the spirits group and close
Round about a holy childhood, as if
drinking its repose.

VII

Shapes of brightness overlean
thee,—
Flash their diadems of youth
On the ringlets which half screen
thee,—
While thou smilest, . . . not
in sooth
Thy smile . . . but the overfair one,
dropt from some ethereal
mouth.

VIII

Haply it is angels' duty,
 During slumber, shade by
 shade
 To fine down this childish beauty
 To the thing it must be made,
 Ere the world shall bring it praises, or
 the tomb shall see it fade.

IX

Softly, softly ! make no noises !
 Now he lieth dead and dumb—
 Now he hears the angels' voices
 Folding 'silence in the room—
 Now he muses deep the meaning of
 the Heaven-words as they
 come.

X

Speak not ! he is consecrated—
 Breathe no breath across his
 eyes.
 Lifted up and separated,
 On the hand of God he lies,
 In a sweetness beyond touching,—
 held in cloistral sanctities.

XI

Could ye bless him—father—
 mother ?
 Bless the dimple in his cheek ?
 Dare ye look at one another,
 And the benediction speak ?
 Would ye not break out in weeping,
 and confess yourselves too
 weak ?

XII

He is harmless—ye are sinful,—
 Ye are troubled—he, at ease :
 From his slumber, virtue winful
 Floweth outward with in-
 crease !
 Dare not bless him ! but be blessed by
 his peace—and go in peace.

CROWNED AND WEDDED

I

WHEN last before her people's face
 her own fair face she bent,
 Within the meek projection of that
 shade she was content
 To erase the child-smile from her lips,
 which seemed as if it might
 Be still kept holy from the world to
 childhood still in sight—
 To erase it with a solemn vow,—a
 princely vow—to rule—

B.P.

A priestly vow—to rule by grace of
 God the pitiful,—
 A very godlike vow—to rule in right
 and righteousness,
 And with the law and for the land !—
 so God the vower bless !

II

The minster was alight that day, but
 not with fire, I ween,
 And long-drawn glitterings swept
 adown that mighty aisled scene.
 The priests stood stoled in their pomp,
 the sworded chiefs in theirs,
 And so, the collared knights,—and so,
 the civil Ministers,—
 And so, the waiting lords and dames
 —and little pages best
 At holding trains—and legates so,
 from countries East and West—
 So, alien princes, native peers, and
 high-born ladies bright,
 Along whose brows the Queen's, new
 crowned, flashed coronets to
 light.—
 And so, the people at the gates, with
 priestly hands on high,
 Which bring the first anointing to all
 legal majesty :
 And so the DEAD—who lie in rows
 beneath the minster floor,
 There, verily an awful state maintain-
 ing evermore—
 The statesman whose clean palm will
 kiss no bribe whate'er it be ;
 The courtier who, for no fair queen,
 will rise up to his knee ;
 The court-dame who, for no court-
 tire, will leave her shroud be-
 hind ;
 The laureate who no courtlier rhyme
 than "dust to dust" can find :
 The kings and queens who having
 made that vow and worn that
 crown,
 Descended unto lower thrones and
 darker, deep adown !
Dieu et mon droit—what is't to them ?
 —what meaning can it have ?—
 The King of kings, the rights of death
 —God's judgment and the grave !
 And when betwixt the quick and dead
 the young fair Queen had vowed,
 The living shouted "May she live !
 Victoria, live !" aloud—
 And as the loyal shouts went up, true
 spirits prayed between,

R

"The blessings happy monarchs have,
be thine, O crownèd Queen!"

III

But now before her people's face she
bendeth hers anew,
And calls them, while she vows, to be
her witness thereunto.
She vowed to rule, and, in that oath,
her childhood put away—
She doth maintain her womanhood,
in vowing love to-day.
O lovely lady!—let her vow!—such
lips become such vows,
And fairer goeth bridal wreath than
crown with vernal brows.
O lovely lady!—let her vow!—yea,
let her vow to love!—
And though she be no less a queen—
with purples hung above,
The pageant of a Court behind, the
royal kin around,
And woven gold to catch her looks
turned maidenly to ground,
Yet may the bride-veil hide from her
a little of that state,
While loving hopes, for retinues,
about her sweetness wait.
SHE vows to love who vowed to rule
—the chosen at her side;
Let none say, "God preserve the
Queen"!—but rather, "Bless the
bride"!—
None blow the trump, none bend the
knee, none violate the dream
Wherein no monarch but a wife, she
to herself may seem.
Or if ye say, "Preserve the Queen!"
—oh, breathe it inward low—
She is a *woman*, and *beloved*!—and
'tis enough but so.
Count it enough, thou noble Prince,
who tak'st her by the hand,
And claimest for thy lady-love, our
lady of the land!
And since, Prince Albert, men have
called thy spirit high and rare,
And true to truth and brave for
truth, as some at Augsburg
were,—
We charge thee by thy lofty thoughts,
and by thy poet-mind
Which not by glory and degree takes
measure of mankind,
Esteem that wedded hand less dear
for sceptre than for ring,

And hold her uncrowned womanhood
to be the royal thing.

IV

And now, upon our Queen's last vow,
what blessings shall we pray?
None, straitened to a shallow crown,
will suit our lips to-day.
Behold, they must be free as love—
they must be broad as free,
Even to the borders of heaven's light
and earth's humanity.
Long live she!—send up loyal shouts
—and true hearts pray between,—
"The blessings happy PEASANTS
have, be thine, O crownèd
Queen!"

CROWNED AND BURIED

I

NAPOLEON!—years ago, and that
great word
Compact of human breath in hate and
dread
And exultation, skied us overhead—
An atmosphere whose lightning was
the sword
Scathing the cedars of the world,—
drawn down
In burnings, by the metal of a crown.

II

Napoleon! Nations, while they cursed
that name,
Shook at their own curse; and while
others bore
Its sound, as of a trumpet, on before,
Brass-fronted legions justified its
fame—
And dying men, on trampled battle-
sods,
Near their last silence, uttered it for
God's.

III

Napoleon! Sages, with high fore-
heads drooped,
Did use it for a problem: children
small
Leapt up to greet it, as at manhood's
call:
Priests blessed it from their altars
overstooped
By meek-eyed Christs,—and widows
with a moan
Spake it, when questioned why they
sate alone.

IV

That name consumed the silence of
the snows
In Alpine keeping, holy and cloud-
hid,
The mimic eagles dared what Nature's
did,
And over-rushed her mountainous
repose
In search of eyries: and the Egyp-
tian river
Mingled the same word with its grand
"For ever."

V

That name was shouted near the
pyramidal
Nilotic tombs, whose mummied habi-
tants,
Packed to humanity's significance,
Motioned it back with stillness.
Shouts as idle
As hireling artists' work of myrrh and
spice
Which swathed last glories round the
Ptolemies.

VI

The world's face changed to hear it.
Kingly men
Came down, in chidden babes' bewil-
derment,
From autocratic places—each con-
tent
With sprinkled ashes for anointing ;
—then
The people laughed or wondered for
the nonce
To see one throne a composite of
thrones.

VII

Napoleon ! even the torrid vastitude
Of India felt in throbbings of the air
That name which scattered by disas-
trous blare
All Europe's bound-lines,—drawn
afresh in blood.
Napoleon—from the Russias, west
to Spain !
And Austria trembled—till ye heard
her chain.

VIII

And Germany was 'ware—and Italy
Oblivious of old fames—her laurel-
locked,
High-ghosted Cæsars passing unin-
voked,—

Did crumble her own ruins with her
knee,
To serve a newer.—Ay ! but French-
men cast
A future from them nobler than her
past.

IX

For, verily, though France augustly
rose
With that raised NAME, and did
assume by such
The purple of the world,—none gave
so much
As she, in purchase—to speak plain,
in loss—
Whose hands, to freedom stretched,
dropped paralysed
To wield a sword or fit an undersized

X

King's crown to a great man's head.
And though along
Her Paris' streets did float on fre-
quent streams
Of triumph, pictured or emmarbled
dreams,
Dreamt right by genius in a world
gone wrong,—
No dream, of all so won, was fair to
see
As the lost vision of her liberty.

XI

Napoleon ! 'twas a high name lifted
high !
It met at last God's thunder sent to
clear
Our compassing and covering atmo-
sphere
And open a clear sight beyond the
sky,
Of supreme empire ; this of earth's
was done—
And kings crept out again to feel the
sun.

XII

The kings crept out—the peoples sate
at home,—
And finding the long-invoked peace
A pall embroidered with worn images
Of rights divine, too scant to cover
doom
Such as they suffered,—cursed the
corn that grew
Rankly, to bitter bread, on Waterloo.

XIII

A deep gloom centred in the deep
 repose—
 The nations stood up mute to count
 their dead—
 And *he* who owned the NAME which
 vibrated
 Through silence,—trusting to his
 noblest foes
 When earth was all too grey for
 chivalry,
 Died of their mercies, 'mid the desert
 sea.

XIV

O wild St. Helen ! very still she kept
 him
 With a green willow for all pyramid,—
 Which stirred a little if the low wind
 did,
 A little more, if pilgrims overwept
 him
 Disparting the lithe boughs to see the
 clay
 Which seemed to cover his for judg-
 ment-day.

XV

Nay ! not so long !—France kept her
 old affection
 As deeply as the sepulchre the corse,
 Until dilated by such love's remorse
 To a new angel of the resurrection,
 She cried, " Behold, thou England ! I
 would have
 The dead whereof thou wottest, from
 that grave."

XVI

And England answered in the cour-
 tesy
 Which, ancient foes turned lovers,
 may befit,—
 " Take back thy dead ! and when
 thou buryest it,
 Throw in all former strifes 'twixt thee
 and me."
 Amen, mine England ! 'tis a courteous
 claim—
 But ask a little room too . . . for
 thy shame !

XVII

Because it was not well, it was not
 well,
 Nor tuneful with thy lofty-chanted
 part
 Among the Oceanides,—that Heart

To bind and bare and vex with vul-
 ture fell.

I would, my noble England ! men
 might seek
 All crimson stains upon thy breast—
 not cheek !

XVIII

I would that hostile fleets had scarred
 this bay,¹
 Instead of the lone ship which waited
 moored
 Until thy princely purpose was as-
 sured,
 Then left a *shadow*—not to pass
 away—
 Not for to-night's moon, nor to-
 morrow's sun !
 Green watching hills, ye witnessed
 what was done !

XIX

But since it *was* done,—in sepulchral
 dust,
 We fain would pay back something of
 our debt
 To France, if not to honour, and for-
 get
 How through much fear we falsified
 the trust
 Of a fallen foe and exile.—We return
 Orestes to Electra . . . in his urn.

XX

A little urn—a little dust inside,
 Which once outbalanced the large
 earth albeit
 To-day a four-years child might carry
 it
 Sleek-browed and smiling, " Let the
 burden 'bide ! "
 Orestes to Electra !—O fair town
 Of Paris, how the wild tears will run
 down

XXI

And run back in the chariot-marks of
 Time,
 When all the people shall come forth
 to meet
 The passive victor, death-still in the
 street
 He rode through 'mid the shouting
 and bell-chime
 And martial music,—under eagles
 which
 Dyed their rapacious beaks at Auster-
 litz,

¹ Written at Torquay.

XXII

Napoleon! he hath come again—
borne home
Upon the popular ebbing heart,—a
sea
Which gathers its own wrecks per-
petually,
Majestically moaning. Give him
room!—
Room for the dead in Paris! welcome
solemn
And grave-deep, 'neath the cannon-
moulded column! ¹

XXIII

There, weapon spent and warrior
spent may rest
From roar of fields; provided Jupiter
Dare trust Saturnus to lie down so
near
His bolts!—And this he *may*. For,
dispossessed
Of any godship lies the godlike arm—
The goat, Jove sucked, as likely to do
harm.

XXIV

And yet . . . Napoleon!—the recov-
ered name
Shakes the old casements of the
world! and we
Look out upon the passing pageantry,
Attesting that the Dead makes good
his claim
To a French grave,—another kingdom
won—
The last—of few spans—by Napoleon.

XXV

Blood fell like dew beneath his sun-
rise—sooth!
But glittered dew-like in the cove-
nant
Midian light. He was a despot—
granted!
But the *advers* of his autocratic mouth
Said yea i' the people's French: he
magnified
The image of the freedom he denied.

XXVI

And if they asked for rights, he made
reply,
"Ye have my glory!"—and so,
drawing round them
His ample purple, glorified and bound
them

¹ It was the first intention to bury him under
the column.

In an embrace that seemed identity.
He ruled them like a tyrant—true!
but none
Were ruled like slaves: each felt
Napoleon.

XXVII

I do not praise this man: the man
was flawed,
For Adam—much more, Christ!—
his knee, unbent—
His hand, unclean—his aspiration,
pent
Within a sword-sweep—pshaw!—but
since he had
The genius to be loved, why let him
have
The justice to be honoured in his
grave.

XXVIII

I think this nation's tears thus poured
together,
Nobler than shouts; I think this
funeral
Grander than crownings, though a
Pope bless all;
I think this grave stronger than
thrones. But whether
The crowned Napoleon or the buried
clay
Be better, I discern not—Angels may.

TO FLUSH, MY DOG

I

LOVING friend, the gift of one
Who her own true faith hath run,
Through thy lower nature,²
Be my benediction said
With my hand upon thy head,
Gentle fellow-creature!

II

Like a lady's ringlets brown,
Flow thy silken ears adown
Either side demurely
Of thy silver-suited breast,
Shining out from all the rest
Of thy body purely.

² This dog was the gift of my dear and admired
friend, Miss Mitford, and belongs to the beautiful
race she has rendered celebrated among English
and American readers. The Flushes have their
laurels as well as the Cæsars,—the chief differ-
ence (at least the very head and front of it) con-
sisting, perhaps, in the bald head of the latter
under the crown.

III

Darkly brown thy body is,
Till the sunshine striking this
Alchemise its dullness,
When the sleek curls manifold
Flash all over into gold,
With a burnished fulness.

IV

Underneath my stroking hand,
Startled eyes of hazel bland
Kindling, growing larger,
Up thou leapest with a spring,
Full of prank and curvetting,
Leaping like a charger.

V

Leap! thy broad tail waves a light;
Leap! thy slender feet are bright,
Canopied in fringes.
Leap—those tasselled ears of thine
Flicker strangely, fair and fine,
Down their golden inches.

VI

Yet, my pretty, sportive friend,
Little is't to such an end
That I praise thy rareness!
Other dogs may be thy peers
Haply in these drooping ears,
And this glossy fairness.

VII

But of *thee*, it shall be said,
This dog watched beside a bed
Day and night unwearied,—
Watched within a curtained room,
Where no sunbeam brake the gloom
Round the sick and dreary.

VIII

Roses, gathered for a vase,
In that chamber died apace,
Beam and breeze resigning—
This dog only, waited on,
Knowing that when light is gone,
Love remains for shining.

IX

Other dogs in thymy dew
Tracked the hares and followed
through
Sunny moor or meadow—
This dog only, crept and crept
Next a languid cheek that slept,
Sharing in the shadow.

X

Other dogs of loyal cheer
Bounded at the whistle clear,
Up the woodside hieing—

This dog only, watched in reach
Of a faintly uttered speech,
Or a louder sighing.

XI

And if one or two quick tears
Dropped upon his glossy ears,
Or a sigh came double,—
Up he sprang in eager haste,
Fawning, fondling, breathing fast,
In a tender trouble.

XII

And this dog was satisfied
If a pale thin hand would glide
Down his dewlaps sloping,—
Which he pushed his nose within,
After,—platforming his chin
On the palm left open.

XIII

This dog, if a friendly voice
Call him now to hither choice
Than such chamber-keeping,
"Come out!" praying from the
door,—
Presseth backward as before,
Up against me leaping.

XIV

Therefore to this dog will I,
Tenderly not scornfully,
Render praise and favour:
With my hand upon his head,
Is my benediction said
Therefore, and for ever.

XV

And because he loves me so,
Better than his kind will do
Often, man or woman,—
Give I back more love again
Than dogs often take of men,—
Leaning from my Human.

XVI

Blessings on thee, dog of mine,
Pretty collars make thee fine,
Sugared milk make fat thee!
Pleasures wag on in thy tail—
Hands of gentle motion fail
Nevermore, to pat thee!

XVII

Downy pillow take thy head,
Silken coverlid bestead,
Sunshine help thy sleeping!
No fly's buzzing wake thee up—
No man break thy purple cup,
Set for drinking deep in.

XVIII

Whiskered cats aointed flee,
 Sturdy stoppers keep from thee
 Cologne distillations ;
 Nuts lie in thy path for stones,
 And thy feast-day macaroons
 Turn to daily rations !

XIX

Mock I thee, in wishing weal ?—
 Tears are in my eyes to feel
 Thou art made so straightly,
 Blessing needs must straighten too,—
 Little canst thou joy or do,
 Thou who lovest *greatly*.

XX

Yet be blessed to the height
 Of all good and all delight
 Pervious to thy nature,
 Only *loved* beyond that line,
 With a love that answers thine,
 Loving fellow-creature !

THE FOURFOLD ASPECT

I

WHEN ye stood up in the house
 With your little childish feet,
 And, in touching Life's first shows,
 First the touch of Love did
 meet,—
 Love and Nearness seeming one,
 By the heartlight cast before,
 And, of all Beloveds, none
 Standing farther than the
 door,—
 Not a name being dear to
 thought,
 With its owner beyond call,—
 Nor a face, unless it brought
 Its own shadow to the wall,—
 When the worst recorded change
 Was of apple dropt from
 bough,—
 When love's sorrow seemed more
 strange
 Than love's treason can seem
 now,—
 Then, the Loving took you up
 Soft, upon their elder knees,—
 Telling why the statues droop
 Underneath the churchyard
 trees,
 And how ye must lie beneath
 them,
 Through the winters long and
 deep,

Till the last trump overbreathe
 them,

And ye smile out of your
 sleep . . .

Oh ! ye lifted up your head, and it
 seemed as if they said

A tale of fairy ships
 With a swan-wing for a
 sail !—

Oh ! ye kissed their loving
 lips

For the merry, merry
 tale !—

So carelessly ye thought upon the
 Dead.

II

Soon ye read in solemn stories
 Of the men of long ago—
 Of the pale bewildering glories
 Shining farther than we know,—
 Of the heroes with the laurel,
 Of the poets with the bay,
 Of the two worlds' earnest quarrel
 For that beauteous Helena,—
 How Achilles at the portal
 Of the tent, heard footsteps
 nigh,

And his strong heart, half-im-
 mortal,

Met the *keilai* with a cry,—
 How Ulysses left the sunlight
 For the pale eidola race,
 Blank and passive through the
 dun light,

Staring blindly on his face.
 How that true wife said to
 Pætus,

With calm smile and wounded
 heart,—

"Sweet, it hurts not !" how
 Admetus

Saw his blessed one depart.
 How King Arthur proved his
 mission,—

And Sir Roland wound his
 horn,—

And at Sangreal's moony vision
 Swords did bristle round like
 corn.

Oh ! ye lifted up your head, and it
 seemed the while ye read,

That this death, then, must
 be found

A Valhalla for the crowned,
 The heroic who prevail,

None, be sure, can enter in
Far below a paladin
Of a noble, noble tale !—
So awfully ye thought upon the
Dead.

III

Ay, but soon ye woke up shrieking,—
As a child that wakes at night
From a dream of sisters speaking
In a garden's summer-light,—
That wakes, starting up and
bounding,
In a lonely, lonely bed,
With a wall of darkness round
him,
Stifling black about his head !—
And the full sense of your mortal
Rushed upon you deep and
loud,
And ye heard the thunder hurtle
From the silence of the cloud !
Funeral-torches at your gateway
Threw a dreadful light within ;
All things changed ! you rose up
straightway,
And saluted Death and Sin.
Since,—your outward man has
rallied,
And your eye and voice grown
bold—
Yet the Sphinx of Life stands
pallid,
With her saddest secret told.
Happy places have grown holy ;
If ye went where once ye went,
Only tears would fall down
slowly,
As at solemn sacrament :
Merry books, once read for pas-
time,
If ye dared to read again,
Only memories of the last time
Would swim darkly up the
brain :
Household names, which used
to flutter
Through your laughter un-
wares,—
God's Divine name ye could
utter
With less trembling in your
prayers !
Ye have dropt adown your head, and
it seems as if ye tread

On your own hearts in the
path
Ye are called to in His
wrath,—
And your prayers go up in
wail !
—" Dost Thou see, then,
all our loss,
O Thou agonised on cross ?
Art Thou reading all its
tale ? "
So mournfully ye think upon the
Dead.

IV

Pray, pray, thou who also weep-
est,
And the drops will slacken so ;—
Weep, weep ;—and the watch
thou keepest,
With a quicker count will go.
Think :—the shadow on the dial
For the nature most undone,
Marks the passing of the trial,
Proves the presence of the sun.
Look, look up, in starry passion,
To the throne above the
spheres,—
Learn ; the spirit's gravitation
Still must differ from the tear's.
Hope, with all the strength thou
usest
In embracing thy despair.
Love ; the earthly love thou lovest
Shall return to thee more fair.
Work ; make clear the forest-
tangles
Of the wildest stranger-land.
Trust : the blessed deathly an-
gels
Whisper, " Sabbath hours at
hand ! "
By the heart's wound when most
gory.
By the longest agony.
Smile !—Behold, in sudden glory
The TRANSFIGURED smiles on
thee !
And ye lifted up your head, and it
seemed as if He said,
" My Beloved, is it so ?
Have ye tasted of My woe ?—
Of My Heaven ye shall not
fail ! "
He stands brightly where
the shade is,

With the keys of Death and
Hades,
And there, ends the mourn-
ful tale.—

So hopefully ye think upon the
Dead.

A FLOWER IN A LETTER

I

My lonely chamber next the sea,
Is full of many flowers set free
By summer's earliest duty ;
Dear friends upon the garden-walk
Might stop amid their fondest talk,
To pull the least in beauty.

II

A thousand flowers—each seeming
one

That learnt by gazing on the sun
To counterfeit his shining—
Within whose leaves the holy dew
That falls from heaven, hath won
anew

A glory . . . in declining.

III

Red roses, used to praises long,
Contented with the poet's song,
The nightingale's being over ;
And lilies white, prepared to touch
The whitest thought, nor soil it much,
Of dreamer turned to lover.

IV

Deep violets you liken to
The kindest eyes that look on you,
Without a thought disloyal ;
And cactuses, a queen might don
If weary of a golden crown,
And still appear as royal.

V

Pansies for ladies all ! I wis
That none who wear such brooches,
miss

A jewel in the mirror ;
And tulips, children love to stretch
Their fingers down, to feel in each
Its beauty's secret nearer.

VI

Love's language may be talked with
these :

To work out choicest sentences,
No blossoms can be meeter,—
And, such being used in Eastern
bowers,

Young maids may wonder if the
flowers
Or meanings be the sweeter.

VII

And such being strewn before a bride,
Her little foot may turn aside,
Their longer bloom decreeing,—
Unless some voice's whispered sound
Should make her gaze upon the
ground

Too earnestly—for seeing.

VIII

And such being scattered on a grave,
Whoever mourneth there, may have
A type that seemeth worthy
Of a fair body hid below,
Which bloomed on earth a time ago,
Then perished as the earthy.

IX

And such being wreathed for worldly
feast,
Across the brimming cup some guest
Their rainbow colours viewing,
May feel them,—with a silent start,—
The covenant, his childish heart
With nature made,—renewing.

X

No flowers our gardened England
hath,
To match with these in bloom and
breath,
Which from the world are hiding
In sunny Devon moist with rills,—
A nunnery of cloistered hills,
The elements presiding.

XI

By Loddon's streams the flowers are
fair,
That meet one gifted lady's care
With prodigal rewarding,
For Beauty is too used to run
To Mitford's bower—to want the
sun
To light her through the garden,

XII

But here, all summers are comprised—
The nightly frosts shrink exorcised
Before the priestly moonshine,
And every Wind with stoléd feet
In wandering down the alleys sweet
Steps lightly on the sunshine,

XIII

And (having promised Harpocrate
Among the nodding roses that

No harm shall touch his daughters)
Gives quite away the rushing sound,
He dares not use upon such ground,
To ever-trickling waters.

XIV

Yet, sun and wind ! what can ye do,
But make the leaves more brightly
show

In posies newly gathered ?—
I look away from all your best,
To one poor flower unlike the rest,—
A little flower half-withered.

XV

I do not think it ever was
A pretty flower,—to make the grass
Look greener where it reddened ;
And now it seems ashamed to be
Alone, in all this company,
Of aspect shrunk and saddened.

XVI

A chamber-window was the spot
It grew in, from a garden-pot,
Among the city shadows :
If any, tending it, might seem
To smile, 'twas only in a dream
Of nature in the meadows.

XVII

How coldly on its head did fall
The sunshine, from the city wall
In pale refraction driven !
How sadly, plashed upon its leaves
The raindrops, losing in the eaves
The first sweet news of Heaven !

XVIII

And those who planted, gathered it
In gamesome or in loving fit,
And sent it as a token
Of what their city pleasures be,—
For one, in Devon by the sea
And garden-blooms, to look on.

XIX

But SHE, for whom the jest was
meant,
With a grave passion innocent
Receiving what was given,—
Oh ! if her face she turned then, . . .
Let none say 'twas to gaze again
Upon the flowers of Devon !

XX

Because, whatever virtue dwells
In genial skies—warm oracles
For gardens brightly springing.—
The flowers which grew beneath your
eyes,

Beloved friends, to mine supplies
A beauty worthier singing !

THE MASK

I

I HAVE a smiling face, she said,
I have a jest for all I meet,
I have a garland for my head
And all its flowers are sweet,—
And so you call me gay, she said.

II

Grief taught to me this smile, she said,
And Wrong did teach this jesting
bold ;
These flowers were plucked from
garden-bed
While a death-chime was tolled—
And what now will you say ?—she
said.

III

Behind no prison-grate, she said,
Which slurs the sunshine half a
mile,
Are captives so uncomforted,
As souls behind a smile.
God's pity let us pray, she said.

IV

I know my face is bright, she said,—
Such brightness, dying suns dif-
fuse !
I bear upon my forehead shed
The sign of what I lose,—
The ending of my day, she said.

V

If I dared leave this smile, she said,
And take a moan upon my mouth,
And tie a cypress round my head,
And let my tears run smooth,—
It were the happier way, she said.

VI

And since that must not be, she said,
I fain your bitter world would leave.
How calmly, calmly, smile the Dead,
Who do not, therefore, grieve !
The yea of Heaven is yea, she said.

VII

But in your bitter world, she said,
Face-joy's a costly mask to wear,
And bought with pangs long nour-
ish'd,
And rounded to despair.
Grief's earnest makes life's play, she
said.

VIII

Ye weep for those who weep?—
 she said—
 Ah fools!—I bid you pass them by!
 Go, weep for those whose hearts
 have bled,
 What time their eyes were dry!
 Whom sadder can I say?—she said.

CALLS ON THE HEART

I

FREE HEART, that singest to-day,
 Like a bird on the first green spray,
 Wilt thou go forth to the world,
 Where the hawk hath his wing
 unfurled
 To follow, perhaps, thy way?
 Where the tamer, thine own will
 bind,
 And, to make thee sing, will blind,
 While the little hip grows for the
 free behind?
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —“No, no!
 Free hearts are better so.”

II

The world, thou hast heard it told,
 Has counted its robber-gold,
 And the pieces stick to the hand.
 The world goes riding it fair and
 grand,
 While the truth is bought and
 sold!
 World-voices East, world-voices
 West,
 They call thee, Heart, from thine
 early rest,
 Come hither, come hither and be
 our guest.”
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —“No no!
 Good hearts are calmer so.”

III

Who calleth thee, Heart? World's
 Strife,
 With a golden heft to his knife:
 World's Mirth, with a finger fine
 That draws on a board in wine
 Her blood-red plans of life:
 World's Gain, with a brow knit
 down:
 World's Fame, with a laurel crown,
 Which rustles most as the leaves turn
 brown—

Heart, wilt thou go?

—“No, no!

Calm hearts are wiser so.”

IV

Hast heard that Proserpina
 (Once fooling) was snatched away,
 To partake the dark king's seat,—
 And that the tears ran fast on her
 feet
 To think how the sun shone
 yesterday?
 With her ankles sunken in asphodel
 She wept for the roses of earth
 which fell
 From her lap when the wild car drave
 to hell.
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —“No, no!
 Wise hearts are warmer so.”

V

And what is this place not seen,
 Where Hearts may hide serene?
 “’Tis a fair still house well kept,
 Which humble thoughts have swept,
 And holy prayers made clean.
 There, I sit with Love in the sun,
 And we two never have done
 Singing sweeter songs than are
 guessed by one.”
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —“No, no!
 Warm hearts are fuller so.”

VI

O Heart, O Love,—I fear
 That Love may be kept too near.
 Hast heard, O Heart, that tale,
 How Love may be false and frail
 To a heart once holden dear?
 —“But this true Love of mine
 Clings fast as the clinging vine,
 And mingles pure as the grapes in
 wine.”
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —“No, no!
 Full hearts beat higher so.”

VII

O Heart, O Love, beware!—
 Look up, and boast not there.
 For who has twirled at the pin?
 ’Tis the world, between Death and
 Sin,—
 The world, and the world's Des-
 pair!
 And Death has quickened his pace

To the hearth, with a mocking face,
Familiar as Love, in Love's own
place—

Heart, wilt thou go ?

"Still no !

High hearts must grieve even so."

VIII

The house is waste to-day,—
The leaf has dropt from the spray,
The thorn, prickt through to the
song :

If summer doeth no wrong

The winter will, they say.

Sing, Heart ! what Heart replies ?

In vain we were calm and wise,

If the tears unknissed stand on in our
eyes.

Heart, wilt thou go ?

—"Ah, no !

Grieved hearts must break even
so."

IX

Howbeit all is not lost :

The warm noon ends in frost,

And worldly tongues of promise,

Like sheep-bells, die off from us

On the desert hills cloud-crossed !

Yet through the silence, shall

Pierce the death-angel's call,

And "Come up hither," recover all.

Heart, wilt thou go ?

—"I go !

Broken hearts triumph so."

WISDOM UNAPPLIED

I

If I were thou, O butterfly,

And poised my purple wings to spy

The sweetest flowers that live and

die,—

II

I would not waste my strength on
those,

As thou,—for summer hath a close,

And pansies bloom not in the snows.

III

If I were thou, O working bee,

And all that honey-gold I see

Could delve from roses easily,

IV

I would not hive it at man's door,

As thou,—that heirdom of my store

Should make him rich, and leave me
poor.

V

If I were thou, O eagle proud,
And screamed the thunder back aloud,
And faced the lightning from the
cloud,

VI

I would not build my eyrie-throne,
As thou,—upon a crumbling store,
Which the next storm may trample
down.

VII

If I were thou, O gallant steed,
With pawing hoof, and dancing head,
And eye outrunning thine own speed,

VIII

I would not meeken to the rein,
As thou,—nor smooth my nostril
plain
From the glad desert's snort and strain.

IX

If I were thou, red-breasted bird,
With song at shut up window heard,
Live Love's sweet "Yes" too long
deferred,

X

I would not overstay delight,
As thou,—but take a swallow-flight,
Till the new spring returned to sight.

XI

While yet I spake, a touch was laid
Upon my brow, whose pride did fade,
As thus, methought, an angel said ;

XII

"If I were *thou* who sing'st this song,
Most wise for others, and most strong
In seeing right while doing wrong,

XIII

"I would not waste my cares, and
choose,
As *thou*,—to seek what thou must
lose,
Such gains as perish in the use.

XIV

"I would not work where none can
win,
As *thou*,—half way 'twixt grief and
sin,
But look above, and judge within.

XV

"I would not let my pulse beat high,
As *thou*,—toward fame's regality,
Nor yet in love's great jeopardy.

XVI

"I would not champ the hard cold
bit,
As *thou*,—of what the world thinks
fit,—
But take God's freedom, using it.

XVII

"I would not play earth's winter out,
As *thou*,—but gird my soul about
And live for life past death and doubt.

XVIII

"Then sing, O singer!—but allow
Beast, fly, and bird, called foolish now,
Are wise (for all thy scorn) as *thou*!"

THE CRY OF THE HUMAN

I

"THERE is no God," the foolish
saith,—

But none, "There is no sorrow;"
And nature oft, the cry of faith,
In bitter need will borrow:
Eyes, which the preacher could not
school,

By wayside graves are raised;
And lips say, "God be pitiful,"
Who ne'er said, "God be praised."
Be pitiful, O God!

II

The tempest stretches from the steep
The shadow of its coming;
The beasts grow tame, and near us
creep,

As help were in the human,
Yet, while the cloud-wheels roll and
grind,

We spirits tremble under!—
The hills have echoes, but we find
No answer for the thunder.

Be pitiful, O God!

III

The battle hurtles on the plains—
Earth feels new scythes upon her;
We reap our brothers for the wains,
And call the harvest . . . honour,—
Draw face to face, front line to line,
One image all inherit,—

Then kill, curse on, by that same sign,
Clay, clay,—and spirit, spirit.

Be pitiful, O God!

IV

The plague runs festering through the
town,

And never a bell is tolling;
And corpses, jostled 'neath the moon,
Nod to the dead-cart's rolling;
The young child calleth for the cup—
The strong man brings it weeping;
The mother from her babe looks up,
And shrieks away its sleeping.

Be pitiful, O God!

V

The plague of gold strikes far and
near,

And deep and strong it enters:
This purple chimar which we wear,
Makes madder than the centaur's:
Our thoughts grow blank, our words
grow strange,

We cheer the pale gold-diggers—
Each soul is worth so much on
'Change,

And marked, like sheep, with
figures.

Be pitiful, O God!

VI

The curse of gold, upon the land
The lack of bread enforces—
The rail-cars snort from strand to
strand,

Like more of Death's White horses!
The rich preach "rights" and future
days,

And hear no angel scoffing,—
The poor die mute—with starving gaze
On corn-ships in the offing.

Be pitiful, O God!

VII

We meet together at the feast—
To private mirth betake us—
We stare down in the winecup, lest
Some vacant chair should shake us!
We name delight, and pledge it
round—

"It shall be ours to-morrow!"
God's seraphs! do your voices sound
As sad in naming sorrow?

Be pitiful, O God!

VIII

We sit together, with the skies,
The steadfast skies, above us,
We look into each other's eyes,—

"And how long will you love us?"—
The eyes grow dim with prophecy,
The voices, low and breathless—
"Till death us part!"—O words, to be
Our *best* for love the deathless!

Be pitiful, O God!

IX

We tremble by the harmless bed
Of one loved and departed—
Our tears drop on the lips that said
Last night, "Be stronger-hearted!"
O God,—to clasp those fingers close,
And yet to feel so lonely!—
To see a light upon such brows,
Which is the daylight only!
Be pitiful, O God!

X

The happy children come to us,
And look up in our faces:
They ask us—Was it thus, and thus,
When we were in their places?—
We cannot speak;—we see anew
The hills we used to live in,
And feel our mother's smile press
through
The kisses she is giving.

Be pitiful, O God!

XI

We pray together at the kirk,
For mercy, mercy, solely—
Hands weary with the evil work,
We lift them to the Holy.
The corpse is calm below our knee—
Its spirit, bright before Thee—
Between them, worse than either, we—
Without the rest or glory!

Be pitiful, O God!

XII

We leave the communing of men,
The murmur of the passions,
And live alone, to live again
With endless generations.
Are we so brave?—The sea and sky
In silence lift their mirrors,
And, glassed therein, our spirits high
Recoil from their own terrors.

Be pitiful, O God!

XIII

We sit on hills our childhood wist,
Woods, hamlets, streams, behold-
ing:
The sun strikes through the farthest
mist,
The city's spire to golden.
The city's golden spire it was,
When hope and health were
strongest,
But now it is the churchyard grass
We look upon the longest.

Be pitiful, O God!

XIV

And soon all vision waxeth dull—
Men whisper, "He is dying:"
We cry no more "Be pitiful!"—
We have no strength for crying.
No strength, no need! Then, soul of
mine,
Look up and triumph rather—
Lo! in the depth of God's Divine,
The Son adjoins the Father—
BE PITIFUL, O GOD!

A LAY OF THE EARLY ROSE

—"discordance that can accord."
—*Romaunt of the Rose.*

A ROSE once grew within
A garden April-green,
In her loneliness, in her loneliness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

A white rose delicate
On a tall bough and straight!
Early comer, early comer,
Never waiting for the summer.

Her pretty gestes did win
South winds to let her in,
In her loneliness, in her loneliness,
All the fairer for that oneness.

"For if I wait," said she,
"Till time for roses be,—
For the moss-rose and the musk-rose,
Maiden-blush and royal-dusk rose,—

"What glory then for me
In such a company?—
Roses plenty, roses plenty,
And one nightingale for twenty?"

"Nay, let me in," said she,
"Before the rest are free,—
In my loneliness, in my loneliness,
All the fairer for that oneness.

"For I would lonely stand,
Uplifting my white hand,
On a mission, on a mission,
To declare the coming vision.

"Upon which lifted sign,
What worship will be mine?
What addressing, what caressing!
And what thanks and praise and
blessing!

"A windlike joy will rush
Through every tree and bush,
Bending softly in affection
And spontaneous benediction.

"Insects, that only may
Live in a sunbright ray,
To my whiteness, to my whiteness,
Shall be drawn, as to a brightness,—

"And every moth and bee
Approach me reverently,
Wheeling o'er me, wheeling o'er me,
Coronals of motioned glory.

"Three larks shall leave a cloud,
To my whiter beauty vowed—
Singing gladly all the moontide,—
Never waiting for the suntide.

"Ten nightingales shall flee
Their woods for love of me,—
Singing sadly all the suntide,
Never waiting for the moontide.

"I ween the very skies
Will look down with surprise,
When low on earth they see me
With my starry aspect dreamy!

"And earth will call her flowers
To hasten out of doors,—
By their curtsies and sweet-smelling,
To give grace to my foretelling."

So praying, did she win
South winds to let her in,
In her loneliness, in her loneliness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

But ah!—alas for her!
No thing did minister
To her praises, to her praises,
More than might unto a daisy's.

No tree nor bush was seen
To boast a perfect green,
Scarcely having, scarcely having,
One leaf broad enough for waving.

The little flies did crawl
Along the southern wall,—
Faintly shifting, faintly shifting
Wings scarce strong enough for lifting.

The lark, too high or low,
I ween, did miss her so,
With his nest down in the gorses,
And his song in the star-courses.

The nightingale did please
To loiter beyond seas.
Guess him in the Happy islands,
Learning music from the silence.

Only the bee, forsooth,
Came in the place of both

Doing honour, doing honour
To the honey-dews upon her.

The skies looked coldly down,
As on a royal crown,
Then with drop for drop, at leisure,
They began to rain for pleasure.

Whereat the Earth did seem
To waken from a dream,
Winter-frozen, winter-frozen,
Her unquiet eyes unclosing—

Said to the Rose—"Ha, Snow!
And art thou fallen so?
Thou, who wert enthroned stately
All along my mountains, lately?"

"Holla, thou world-wide snow!
And art thou wasted so?
With a little bough to catch thee,
And a little bee to watch thee?"

—Poor Rosé, to be misknown!
Would she had ne'er been blown,
In her loneliness, in her loneliness,—
All the sadder for that oneness!

Some word she tried to say—
Some *no* . . . ah, wellaway!
But the passion did o'ercome her,
And the fair frail leaves dropped from
her—

Dropped from her, fair and mute,
Close to a poet's foot,
Who beheld them, smiling slowly,
As at something sad yet holy,—

Said, "Verily and thus
It chanceth eke with us
Poets singing sweetest snatches,
While that deaf men keep the
watches—

"Vaunting to come before
Our own age evermore
In a loneliness, in a loneliness,
And the nobler for that oneness.

"Holy in voice and heart,—
To high ends, set apart!
All unmated, all unmated,
Because so consecrated.

"But if alone we be,
Where is our empery?
And if none can reach our stature,
Who can praise our lofty nature?"

"What bell will yield a tone,
Swung in the air alone?"

If no brazen clapper bringing,
Who can hear the chimed ringing ?

"What angel, but would seem
To sensual eyes, ghost-dim ?
And without assimilation,
Vain is inter-penetration.

"And thus, what can we do,
Poor rose and poet too,
Who both antedate our mission
In an unprepared season ?

"Drop, leaf—be silent, song—
Cold things we come among :
We must warm them, we must warm
them,
Ere we ever hope to charm them.

"Howbeit" (here his face
Lightened around the place,—
So to mark the outward turning
Of his spirit's inward burning)—

"Something it is, to hold
In God's worlds manifold,
First revealed to creature-duty,
Some new form of His mild Beauty.

"Whether that form respect
The sense or intellect,
Holy be, in mood or meadow,
The Chief Beauty's sign and shadow !

"Holy, in me and thee,
Rose fallen from the tree,—
Though the word stand dumb around
us,
All unable to expound us.

"Though none us deign to bless,
Blessed are we, nathless ;
Blessed still and consecrated,
In that, rose, we were created.

"Oh, shame to poet's lays
Sung for the dole of praise,—
Hoarsely sung upon the highway
With that '*Obolum da mihi.*'

"Shame, shame to poet's soul
Pining for such a dole,
When Heaven-chosen to inherit
The high throne of a chief spirit !

"Sit still upon your thrones,
O ye poetic ones !
And if, sooth, the world decry you,
Let it pass unchallenged by you !

"Ye to yourselves suffice,
Without its flatteries,

Self-contentedly approve you
Unto HIM who sits above you,—

"In prayers—that upward mount
Like to a fair-sunned fount
Which, in gushing back upon you,
Hath an upper music won you,—

"In faith—that still perceives
No rose can shed her leaves,
Far less, poet fall from mission—
With an unfulfilled fruition !

"In hope—that apprehends
An end beyond these ends ;
And great uses rendered duly
By the meanest song sung truly !

"In thanks—for all the good,
By poets understood—
For the sound of seraphs moving
Down the hidden depths of loving,—

"For sights of things away,
Through fissures of the clay,
Promised things which *shall* be given
And sung over, up in Heaven,—

"For life, so lovely-vain,—
For death which breaks the chain,—
For the sense of present sweetness,—
And this yearning to completeness !"

BERTHA IN THE LANE

I

Put the broidery-frame away,
For my sewing is all done !
The last thread is used to-day,
And I need not join it on.
Though the clock stands at the
noon
I am weary ! I have sewn,
Sweet, for thee, a wedding-gown.

II

Sister, help me to the bed,
And stand near me, Dearest-sweet ;
Do not shrink nor be afraid,
Blushing with a sudden heat !
No one standeth in the street ?—
By God's love I go to meet,
Love I thee with love complete.

III

Lean thy face down ! drop it in
These two hands, that I may hold
"Twixt their palms thy cheek and
chin,
Stroking back the curls of gold.

'Tis a fair, fair face, in sooth—
Larger eyes and redder mouth
Than mine were in my first youth.

IV

Thou art younger by seven years—
Ah!—so bashful at my gaze,
That the lashes, hung with tears,
Grow too heavy to upraise?
I would wound thee by no touch
Which thy shyness feels as such—
Dost thou mind me, Dear, so
much?

V

Have I not been nigh a mother
To thy sweetness—tell me, Dear?
Have we not loved one another
Tenderly, from year to year,
Since our dying mother mild
Said with accents undefiled,
“Child, be mother to this child!”

VI

Mother, mother, up in heaven,
Stand up on the Jasper sea,
And be witness I have given
All the gifts required of me,—
Hope that blessed me, bliss that
crowned,
Love, that left me with a wound,
Life itself, that turneth round!

VII

Mother, mother, thou art kind,
Thou art standing in the room,—
In a molten glory shrined,
That rays off into the gloom!
But thy smile is bright and bleak
Like cold waves—I cannot speak,
I sob in it, and grow weak.

VIII

Ghostly mother, keep aloof
One hour longer from my soul—
For I still am thinking of
Earth's warm-beating joy and
dole!
On my finger is a ring
Which I still see glittering,
When the night hides everything.

IX

Little sister, thou art pale!
Ah, I have a wandering brain—
But I lose that fever-bale,
And my thoughts grow calm again.
Lean down closer—closer still!
I have words thine ear to fill,—
And would kiss thee at my will.

B.P.

X

Dear, I heard thee in the spring,
Thee and Robert—through the
trees,—

When we all went gathering
Boughs of may-bloom for the bees.
Do not start so! think instead
How the sunshine overhead
Seemed to trickle through the shade.

XI

What a day it was, that day!
Hills and vales did openly
Seem to heave and throb away
At the sight of the great sky:
And the Silence, as it stood
In the Glory's golden flood,
Audibly did bud—and bud.

XII

Through the winding hedgerows green,
How we wandered, I and you,—
With the bowery tops shut in,
And the gates that showed the
view—
How we talked there! thrushes soft
Sang our pauses out—or oft
Bleatings took them, from the crof.

XIII

Till the pleasure grown too strong
Left me muter evermore;
And, the winding road being long,
I walked out of sight, before,
And so, wrapt in musings fond,
Issued (past the wayside pond)
On the meadow-lands beyond.

XIV

I sate down beneath the beech
Which leans over to the lane,
And the far sound of your speech
Did not promise any pain:
And I blessed you full and free,
With a smile stooped tenderly
O'er the may-flowers on my knee.

XV

But the sound grew into word
As the speakers drew more near—
Sweet, forgive me that I heard
What you wished me not to hear.
Do not weep so—do not shake—
Oh,—I heard thee, Bertha, make
Good true answers for my sake.

XVI

Yes, and HE too! let him stand
In thy thoughts, untouched by
blame.

Could he help it, if my hand
He had claimed with hasty claim?
That was wrong perhaps—but
then
Such things be—and will, again!
Women cannot judge for men.

XVII

Had he seen thee, when he swore
He would love but me alone?
Thou wert absent,—sent before
To our kin in Sidmouth town.
When he saw thee who art best
Past compare and loveliest,
He but judged thee as the rest.

XVIII

Could we blame him with grave words,
Thou and I, Dear, if we might?
Thy brown eyes have looks like birds,
Flying straightway to the light:
Mine are older.—Hush!—look out—
Up the street! Is none without?
How the poplar swings about!

XIX

And that hour—beneath the beech,—
When I listened in a dream,
And he said in his deep speech,
That he owed me all *esteem*,—
Each word swam in on my brain
With a dim, dilating pain,
Till it burst with that last strain—

XX

I fell flooded with a Dark,
In the silence of a swoon—
When I rose, still cold and stark,
There was night,—I saw the moon:
And the stars, each in its place,
And the may-blooms on the grass,
Seemed to wonder what I was.

XXI

And I walked as if apart
From myself, when I could stand—
And I pitied my own heart,
As if I held it in my hand,—
Somewhat coldly,—with a sense
Of fulfilled benevolence,
And a "Poor thing" negligence.

XXII

And I answered coldly too,
When you met me at the door;
And I only *heard* the dew
Dripping from me to the floor:
And the flowers I bade you see,
Were too withered for the bee,—
As my life, henceforth, for me.

XXIII

Do not weep so—Dear—heart-warm!
It was best as it befell!
If I say he did me harm,
I speak wild,—I am not well.
All his words were kind and good—
He esteemed me! Only, blood
Runs so faint in womanhood.

XXIV

Then I always was too grave,—
Liked the saddest ballads sung.—
With that look, besides, we have
In our faces, who die young.
I had died, Dear, all the same—
Life's long, joyous, jostling game
Is too loud for my meek shame.

XXV

We are so unlike each other,
Thou and I, that none could guess
We were children of one mother,
But for mutual tenderness.
Thou art rose-lined from the cold,
And meant, verily, to hold
Life's pure pleasures manifold.

XXVI

I am pale as crocus grows
Close beside a rose-tree's root!
Whosoe'er would reach the rose,
Treads the crocus underfoot—
I, like may-bloom on thorn-tree—
Thou, like merry summer-bee!
Fit that I be plucked for thee.

XXVII

Yet who plucks me?—no one
mourns—
I have lived my season out,—
And now die of my own thorns
Which I could not live without.
Sweet, be merry! How the light
Comes and goes! If it be night,
Keep the candles in my sight.

XXVIII

Are there footsteps at the door?
Look out quickly. Yea, or nay?
Some one might be waiting for
Some last word that I might say.
Nay? So best!—So angels would
Stand off clear from deathly road,
Not to cross the sight of God.

XXIX

Colder grow my hands and feet—
When I wear the shroud I made,
Let the folds lie straight and neat,
And the rosemary be spread,—

That if any friend should come,
(To see *thee*, sweet!) all the room
May be lifted out of gloom.

xxx

And, dear Bertha, let me keep
On my hand this little ring,
Which at night, when others sleep,
I can still see glittering.
Let me wear it out of sight,
In the grave,—where it will light
All the Dark up, day and night.

xxxix

On that grave, drop not a tear!
Else, though fathom-deep the
place,
Through the woollen shroud I wear,
I shall feel it on my face.
Rather smile there, blessed one,
Thinking of me in the sun—
Or forget me—smiling on!

xxxix

Art thou near me? nearer? so!
Kiss me close upon the eyes,
That the earthly light may go
Sweetly as it used to rise,
When I watched the morning-grey
Strike, betwixt the hills, the way
He was sure to come that day.

xxxix

So,—no more vain words be said!—
The hosannas nearer roll—
Mother, smile now on thy Dead,
I am death-strong in my soul.
Mystic Dove alit on cross,
Guide the poor bird of the snows
Through the snow-wind above
loss!

xxxix

Jesus, Victim, comprehending
Love's divine self-abnegation,—
Cleanse my love in its self-spending,
And absorb the poor libation!
Wind my thread of life up higher,
Up, through angels' hands of fire!—
I aspire while I expire!—

LOVED ONCE

I

I CLASSED, appraising once,
Earth's lamentable sounds,—the well-
aday,
The jarring yea and nay,
The fall of kisses on unanswering clay,

The sobbed farewell, the welcome
mournfuller;—

But all did leaven the air
With a less bitter leaven of sure
despair,
Than these words—"I loved
ONCE."

II

And who saith, "I loved ONCE?"
Not angels,—whose clear eyes, love,
love, foresee,
Love through eternity,
And, by To Love, do apprehend To
Be.
Not God, called LOVE, His noble
crown-name,—casting
A light too broad for blasting!
The great God changing not from
everlasting,
Saith never, "I loved ONCE."

III

Oh, never the "Loved ONCE,"
Dost THOU say, Victim-Christ, mis-
prized friend!
The cross and curse may rend,
But having loved Thou lovest to the
end!
This is man's saying—man's. Too
weak to move
One sphered star above,
Man desecrates the eternal God-word
Love
With his No More, and Once.

IV

How say ye, "We loved once."
Blasphemers? Is your earth not
cold enow,
Mourners, without that snow?
Ah, friends! and would ye wrong each
other so?
And could ye say of some whose love
is known,
Whose prayers have met your
own,
Whose tears have fallen for you,
whose smiles have shone,
Such words, "We loved them
ONCE?"

V

Could ye, "We loved her once,"
Say calm of *me*, sweet friends, when
out of sight?
When hearts of better right
Stand in between me and your happy
light?

Or when, as flowers kept too long in
the shade,
Ye find my colours fade,
And all that is not love in me, de-
cayed ?
Such words—Ye loved me ONCE !

VI

Could ye, " We loved her once,"
Say cold of me when further put
away
In earth's sepulchral clay ?
When mute the lips which deprecate
to-day ?—
Not so ! not then—*least* then ! When
Life is shriven,
And Death's full joy is given,—
Of those who sit and love you up in
Heaven,
Say not, " We loved them once."

VII

Say never, ye loved ONCE !
God is too near above, the grave be-
low,
And all our moments go
Too quickly past our souls, for saying
so.
The mysteries of Life and Death
avenge
Affections light of range—
There comes no change to justify that
change,
Whatever comes—Loved ONCE !

VIII

And yet that word of ONCE
Is humanly acceptive. Kings have
said
Shaking a discrowned head,
" We ruled once,"—dotards, " We
once taught and led,"—
Cripples once danced i' the vines,—
and bards approved,
Were once by scornings, moved :
But love strikes one hour—LOVE.
Those *never* loved,
Who dream that they loved ONCE.

A RHAPSODY OF LIFE'S
PROGRESS

" Fill all the stops of life with tuneful breath,"
—*Poems on Man, by Cornelius Matthews.*¹

I

We are borne into life—it is sweet, it
is strange !

¹ A small volume, by an American poet—as
remarkable in thought and manner for a vital
sinewy vigour, as the right arm of Pathfinder.

We lie still on the knee of a mild
Mystery,
Which smiles with a change !
But we doubt not of changes, we
know not of spaces ;
The Heavens seem as near as our own
mother's face is,
And we think we could touch all the
stars that we see ;
And the milk of our mother is white
on our mouth ;
And, with small childish hands, we
are turning around
The apple of Life which another has
found ;—
It is warm with our touch, not with
sun of the south,
And we count, as we turn it, the red
side for four—
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art sweet, thou art strange
evermore.

II

Then all things look strange in the
pure golden ether :
We walk through the gardens with
hands linked together,
And the lilies look large as the
trees ;
And as loud as the birds, sing the
bloom-loving bees,—
And the birds sing like angels, so
mystical-fine ;
And the cedars are brushing the arch-
angel's feet,
And time is eternity,—love is divine,
And the world is complete.
Now, God bless the child,—father,
mother, respond !
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet.

III

Then we leap on the earth with the
armour of youth,
And the earth rings again,
And we breathe out, " O beauty,"—
we cry out, " O truth,"
And the bloom of our lips drops with
wine ;
And our blood runs amazed 'neath
the calm hyaline,—
The earth cleaves to the foot, the sun
burns to the brain,—
What is this exultation ? and what
this despair ?—

The strong pleasure is smiting the
nerves into pain,
And we drop from the Fair, as we
climb to the Fair,
And we lie in a trance at its feet ;
And the breath of an angel cold-
piercing the air
Breathes fresh on our faces in
swoon ; . . .
And we think him so near he is this
side the sun,
And we wake to a whisper self-mur-
mured and fond,
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

IV

And the winds and the waters in
pastoral measures
Go winding around us, with roll upon
roll,
Till the soul lies within in a circle of
pleasures
Which hideth the soul :
And we run with the stag, and we
leap with the horse,
And we swim with the fish through
the broad water-course,
And we strike with the falcon, and
hunt with the hound,
And the joy which is in us, flies out
with a wound,—
And we shout so aloud, " We exult,
we rejoice,"
That we lose the low moan of our
brothers around,—
And we shout so adeep down crea-
tion's profound
We are deaf to God's voice—
And we bind the rose-garland on
forehead and ears,
Yet we are not ashamed,
And the dew of the roses that runneth
unblamed
Down our cheeks, is not taken for
tears.
Help us, God, trust us, man, love
us, woman ! " I hold
Thy small head in my hands,—with
its grapelets of gold
Growing bright through my fingers,—
like altar for oath,
'Neath the vast golden spaces like
witnessing faces
That watch the eternity strong in the
troth—

I love thee, I leave thee,—
Live for thee, die for thee !
I prove thee, deceive thee,—
Undo evermore thee !
Help me, God, slay me, man !—one
is mourning for both !"
And we stand up though young near
the funeral-sheet
Which covers the Cæsar and old
Pharamond,
And death is so nigh us Life cools
from its heat—
O Life, O Beyond,
Art thou fair,—art thou sweet ?

V

Then we act to a purpose—we spring
up erect—
We will tame the wild mouths of the
wilderness-steeds,
We will plough up the deep in the
ships double-decked,
We will build the great cities, and do
the great deeds,—
Strike the steel upon steel, strike the
soul upon soul,
Strike the dole on the weal, overcom-
ing the dole,—
Let the cloud meet the cloud in a
grand thunder-roll !
"While the eagle of Thought rides
the tempest in scorn,
Who cares if the lightning is burning
the corn ?
Let us sit on the thrones
In a purple sublimity,
And grind down men's bones
To a pale unanimity.
Speed me, God !—serve me, man !—I
am god over men !
When I speak in my cloud, none shall
answer again—
'Neath the stripe and the bond,
Lie and mourn at my feet !"—
O thou Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art
sweet !

VI

Then we grow into thought,—and
with inward ascensions
Touch the bounds of our Being !
We lie in the dark here, swathed
doubly around
With our sensual relations and social
conventions,

You are 'ware of a sight, yet are 'ware
of a sound

Beyond Hearing and Seeing,—
Are aware that a Hades rolls deep on
all sides,

With its infinite tides
About and above us,—until the strong
arch

Of our life creaks and bends as if
ready for falling,

And through the dim rolling, we
hear the sweet calling

Of spirits that speak, in a soft under-
tongue,

The sense of the mystical march;
And we cry to them softly, "Come
nearer, come nearer,

And lift up the lap of this Dark, and
speak clearer,

And teach us the song that ye
sung."

And we smile in our thought if they
answer or no,—

For to dream of a sweetness is sweet
as to know!

Wonders breathe in our face
And we ask not their name;

Love takes all the blame
Of the world's prison-place!

And we sing back the songs as we
guess them, aloud;

And we send up the lark of our music
that cuts

Untired through the cloud,
To beat with its wings at the lattice

Heaven shuts;

Yet the angels look down and the
mortals look up

As the little wings beat,
And the poet is blessed with their
pity or hope.

'Twixt the Heavens and the earth,
can a poet despond?

O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

VII

Then we wring from our souls their
applicative strength,

And bend to the cord the strong bow
of our ken;

And bringing our lives to the level of
others,

Hold the cup we have filled, to their
uses at length—

"Help me, God! love me, man! I am
man among men,

And my life is a pledge
Of the ease of another's!"

From the fire and the water we drive
out the steam

With a rush and a roar and the speed
of a dream,

And the car without horses the car
without wings

Roars onward and flies
On its pale iron edge,

'Neath the heat of a Thought sitting
still in our eyes;

And the hand knots in air, with the
bridge that it flings,

Two peaks far disrupted by ocean and
skies,—

And, lifting a fold of the smooth flow-
ing Thames,

Draws under, the world with its tur-
moils and pother,

While the swans float on softly,
untouched in their calms

By Humanity's hum at the root of
the springs!

And with reachings of Thought we
reach down to the deeps

Of the souls of our brothers,—
We teach them full words with our

slow-moving lips,
"God," "Liberty," "Truth,"—

which they hearken and
think

And work into harmony, link upon
link

Till the silver meets round the earth
gelid and dense,

Shedding sparks of electric respond-
ence intense

On the dark of eclipse!
Then we hear through the silence and
glory afar,

As from shores of a star
In aphelion,—the new generations
that cry

In attune to our voice and harmoni-
ous reply,

"God," "Liberty," "Truth!"
We are glorious forsooth—

And our name has a seat,
Though the shroud should be
donned!

O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

VIII

Help me, God—help me, man; I am
low, I am weak—

Death loosens my sinews and creeps
in my veins ;
My body is cleft by these wedges of
pains,

From my spirit's serene ;
And I feel the externe and insensate
creep in

On my organised clay.

I sob not, nor shriek,

Yet I faint fast away !

I am strong in the spirit,—deep-
thoughted, clear-eyed,—

I could walk, step for step, with an
angel beside,

On the Heaven-heights of
truth !

Oh, the soul keeps its youth—
But the body faints sore, it is tired in
the race,—

It sinks from the chariot ere reaching
the goal,

It is weak, it is cold,

The rein drops from its hold—

It sinks back, with the death in its
face.

On, chariot—on, soul,—

Ye are all the more fleet—

Be alone at the goal

Of the strange and the sweet !

IX

Love us, God, love us, man ! we be-
lieve, we achieve—

Let us love, let us live,

For the acts correspond—

We are glorious—and DIE !

And again on the knee of a mild
Mystery

That smiles with a change,

Here we lie.

O DEATH, O BEYOND,

Thou art sweet, thou art strange !

L. E. L.'S LAST QUESTION

"Do you think of me as I think of you ?"

(From her poem written during the voyage
to the Cape.)

I

"Do you think of me as I think of you,
My friends, my friends ?"—She said
it from the sea,

The English minstrel in her min-
strelsy,

While under brighter skies than erst
she knew

Her heart grew dark,—and groped
there, as the blind,

To reach across the waves friends left
behind—

"Do you think of me as I think of
you ?"

II

It seemed not much to ask—As *I* of
you ?

We all do ask the same. No eyelids
cover

Within the meekest eyes, that ques-
tion over,—

And little in the world the Loving
do

But sit (among the rocks ?) and listen
for

The echo of their own love evermore—

"Do you think of me as I think of
you ?"

III

Love learned, she had sung of love
and love,—

And, like a child that sleeping with
dropt head

Upon the fairy-book he lately read,
Whatever household noises round

him move
Hears in his dream some elfin turbu-
lence,—

Even so, suggestive to her inward
sense,

All sounds of life assumed one tune of
love.

IV

And when the glory of her dream
withdrew,—

When knightly gestic and courtly
pageantries

Were broken in her visionary eyes
By tears the solemn seas attested

true,—
Forgetting that sweet lute beside her
hand,

She asked not,—Do you praise me, O
my land ?—

But,—"Think ye of me, friends, as I
of you ?"

V

Hers was the hand that played for
many a year

Love's silver phrase for England,—
smooth and well !

Would God, her heart's more inward
oracle

In that lone moment might confirm
her dear !

For when her questioned friends in
 agony
 Made passionate response,—“We
 think of *thee*,”—
 Her place was in the dust, too deep to
 hear.

VI

Could she not wait to catch their
 answering breath?
 Was she content—content—with
 ocean's sound,
 Which dashed its mocking infinite
 around
 One thirsty for a little love?—be-
 neath
 Those stars, content,—where last
 her song had gone,—
They, mute and cold in radiant life,—
 as soon
 Their singer was to be, in darksome
 death?¹

VII

Bring your vain answers—cry, “We
 think of *thee*!”
 How think ye of her? warm in long
 ago
 Delights?—or crowned with budding
 bays? Not so.
 None smile and none are crowned
 where lieth she,—
 With all her visions unfulfilled save
 one—
 Her childhood's—of the palm-trees
 in the sun—
 And lo! their shadow on her sepul-
 chre!

VIII

“Do ye think of me as I think of
 you?”—
 O friends,—O kindred,—O dear
 brotherhood
 Of all the world! what are we, that
 we should
 For covenants of long affection sue?
 Why press so near each other when
 the touch
 Is barred by graves? Not much,
 and yet too much,
 Is this “Think of me as I think of
 you.”

IX

But while on mortal lips I shape anew
 A sigh to mortal issues,—verily

¹ Her lyric on the Polar star came home
 with her latest papers.

Above the unshaken stars that see us
 die,
 A vocal pathos rolls! and He who
 drew
 All life from dust, and for all, tasted
 death,
 By death and life and love, appealing,
 saith,
 “Do you think of Me as I think of
 you?”

THE HOUSE OF CLOUDS

I

I WOULD build a cloudy House
 For my thoughts to live in,
 When for earth too fancy-loose,
 And too low for Heaven!
 Hush! I talk my dream aloud—
 I build it bright to see,—
 I build it on the moonlit cloud,
 To which I looked with *thee*.

II

Cloud-walls of the morning's grey,
 Faced with amber column,—
 Crowned with crimson cupola
 From a sunset solemn!
 May-mists, for the casements, fetch
 Pale and glimmering,
 With a sunbeam hid in each,
 And a smell of spring.

III

Build the entrance high and proud,
 Darkening and then brightening
 Of a riven thunder-cloud,
 Veined by the lightning;
 Use one with an iris-stain
 For the door within,
 Turning to a sound like rain
 As I enter in.

IV

Build a spacious hall thereby;
 Boldly, never fearing,
 Use the blue place of the sky
 Which the wind is clearing,—
 Branched with corridors sublime,
 Flecked with winding stairs—
 Such as children wish to climb,
 Following their own prayers.

V

In the mutest of the house,
 I will have my chamber:
 Silence at the door shall use
 Evening's light of amber,
 Solemnising every mood,
 Softening in degree,—

Turning sadness into good,
As I turn the key.

VI

Be my chamber tapestried
With the showers of summer,
Close, but soundless,—glorified
When the sunbeams come here ;
Wandering harpers, harping on
Waters stringed for such,—
Drawing colours, for a tune,
With a vibrant touch.

VII

Bring a shadow green and still
From the chestnut forest,
Bring a purple from the hill,
When the heat is sorest ;
Spread them out from wall to wall,
Carpet-wove around,—
Whereupon the foot shall fall
In light instead of sound.

VIII

Bring the fantasque cloudlets home
From the noontide zenith,
Ranged for sculptures round the
room,—
Named as Fancy weeneth ;
Some be Junos, without eyes ;
Naiads, without sources ;
Some be birds of paradise,
Some, Olympian horses.

IX

Bring the dews the birds shake off,
Waking in the hedges,—
Those too, perfumed for a proof,
From the lilies' edges :
From our England's field and moor,
Bring them calm and white in,
Whence to form a mirror pure
For Love's self-delighting.

X

Bring a grey cloud from the east
Where the lark is singing,
Something of the song at least
Unlost in the bringing ;
That shall be a morning chair
Poet-dream may sit in,
When it leans out on the air,
Unrhymed and unwritten.

XI

Bring the red cloud from the sun !
While he sinketh, catch it ;
That shall be a couch,—with one
Sidelong star to watch it,—

Fit for poet's finest Thought,
At the curfew-sounding,—
Things unseen being nearer brought
Than the seen, around him.

XII

Poet's thought,—not poet's sigh !
'Las, they come together !
Cloudy walls divide and fly,
As in April weather !
Cupola and column proud,
Structure bright to see—
Gone ! except that moonlit cloud
To which I looked with *thee* !

XIII

Let them ! Wipe such visionings
From the Fancy's cartel—
Love secures some fairer things
Dowered with his immortal.
The sun may darken,—heaven be
bowed—
But still, unchanged shall be,—
Here in my soul,—that moonlit
cloud,
To which I looked with *THEE* !

CATARINA TO CAMOENS

DYING IN HIS ABSENCE ABROAD, AND
REFERRING TO THE POEM IN
WHICH HE RECORDED THE
SWEETNESS OF HER EYES

I

On the door you will not enter,
I have gazed too long—adieu !
Hope withdraws her peradventure—
Death is near me,—and not *you* !
Come, O lover,
Close and cover
These poor eyes, you called, I ween,
“ Sweetest eyes were ever seen.”

II

When I heard you sing that burden
In my vernal days and bowers,
Other praises disregarding,
I but hearkened that of yours—
Only saying
In heart-playing,
“ Blessed eyes mine eyes have been,
If the sweetest, *HIS* have seen ! ”

III

But all changes. At this vesper,
Cold the sun shines down the door.
If you stood there, would you whisper
“ Love, I love you,” as before,—

Death pervading
Now, and shading
Eyes you sang of, that yestreen,
As the sweetest ever seen ?

IV

Yes ! I think, were you beside them,
Near the bed I die upon,—
Though their beauty you denied them,
As you stood there, looking down,
You would truly
Call them duly,
For the love's sake found therein,—
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

V

And if *you* looked down upon them,
And if *they* looked up to *you*,
All the light which has foregone them
Would be gathered back anew !
They would truly
Be as duly
Love-transformed to Beauty's
sheen,—
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

VI

But, ah me ! you only see me
In your thoughts of loving man,
Smiling soft perhaps and dreamy
Through the wavings of my fan,—
And unweeting
Go repeating,
In your reverie serene,
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

VII

While my spirit leans and reaches
From my body still and pale,
Fain to hear what tender speech is
In your love to help my bale—
O my poet,
Come and show it !
Come, of latest love, to glean
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

VIII

O my poet, O my prophet,
When you praised their sweetness
so,
Did you think, in singing of it,
That it might be near to go ?
Had you fancies
From their glances,
That the grave would quickly screen
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen ?"

IX

No reply ! The fountain's warble
In the court-yard sounds alone.

As the water to the marble
So my heart falls with a moan,
From love-sighing
To this dying !
Death forerunneth Love to win
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

X

Will you come ? When I'm departed
Where all sweetnesses are hid—
When thy voice, my tender-hearted,
Will not lift up either lid.
Cry, O lover,
Love is over !
Cry beneath the cypress green—
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

XI

When the angelus is ringing,
Near the convent will you walk,
And recall the choral singing
Which brought angels down our
talk ?
Spirit-shriven
I viewed Heaven,
Till you smiled—"Is earth unclean,
Sweetest eyes were ever seen ?"

XII

When beneath the palace-lattice,
You ride slow as you have done,
And you see a face there—that is
Not the old familiar one,—
Will you oftly
Murmur softly,
"Here, ye watched me morn and
e'en,
Sweetest eyes were ever seen !"

XIII

When the palace ladies sitting
Round your gittern shall have
said,
"Poet, sing those verses written
For the lady who is dead,"—
Will you tremble,
Yet dissemble,—
Or sing hoarse, with tears between,
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen ?"

XIV

"Sweetest eyes !" how sweet in flow-
ings,
The repeated cadence is !
Though you sang a hundred poems,
Still the best one would be this.
I can hear it
'Twixt my spirit
And the earth-noise intervene—
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen !"

xv

But the priest waits for the praying,
And the choir are on their knees,
And the soul must pass away in
Strains more solemn high than
these.

Misereve

For the weary—
Oh, no longer for Catrine
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen!"

xvi

Keep my riband; take and keep it,—
I have loosed it from my hair;¹
Feeling, while you overweep it,
Not alone in your despair,—
Since with saintly
Watch, unfaintly,
Out of Heaven shall o'er you lean
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

xvii

But—but *now*—yet unremoved
Up to Heaven, they glisten fast:
You may cast away, Belovéd,
In your future all my past!
Such old phrases
May be praises
For some fairer bosom-queen—
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen!"

xviii

Eyes of mine, what are ye doing?
Faithless, faithless,—praised amiss
If a tear be of your showing,
Dropt for any hope of his!
Death has boldness
Besides coldness,
If unworthy tears demean
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

xix

I will look out to his future—
I will bless it till it shine.
Should he ever be a suitor
Unto sweeter eyes than mine,
Sunshine gild them,
Angels shield them,
Whatsoever eyes terrene
Be the sweetest his have seen!

A PORTRAIT

"One name is Elizabeth."—BEN JONSON.

I will paint her as I see her.
Ten times have the lilies blown,
Since she looked upon the sun.

¹ She left him the riband from her hair.

And her face is lily-clear—
Lily-shaped, and drooped in duty
To the law of its own beauty.

Oval cheeks encoloured faintly,
Which a trail of golden hair
Keeps from fading off to air:

And a forehead fair and saintly,
Which two blue eyes undershine,
Like meek prayers before a shrine.

Face and figure of a child,—
Though too calm, you think, and
tender,
For the childhood you would lend
her.

Yet child-simple, undefiled,
Frank, obedient,—waiting still
On the turnings of your will.

Moving light, as all young things,—
As young birds, or early wheat
When the wind blows over it.

Only, free from flutterings
Of loud mirth that scorneth
measure—
Taking love for her chief pleasure.

Choosing pleasures (for the rest)
Which comes softly—just as *she*,
When she nestles at your knee.

Quiet talk she liketh best,
In a bower of gentle looks,—
Watering flowers, or reading books.

And her voice, it murmurs lowly,
As a silver stream may run,
Which yet feels, you feel, the sun.

And her smile, it seems half holy,
As if drawn from thoughts more far
Than our common jestings are.

And if any poet knew her,
He would sing of her with falls
Used in lovely madrigals.

And if any painter drew her,
He would paint her unaware
With a halo round her hair.

And if reader read the poem,
He would whisper—"You have
done a
Consecrated little Una!"

And a dreamer (did you show him
That same picture) would exclaim,
" 'Tis my angel, with a name!"

And a stranger—when he sees her
In the street even—smileth stilly,
Just as *you* would at a lily.

And all voices that address her,
Soften, sleeken every word,—
As if speaking to a bird.

And all fancies yearn to cover
The hard earth whereon she passes,
With the thymy scented grasses.

And all hearts do pray, "God love
her!"

Ay, and certes, in good sooth,
We may all be sure HE DOETH.

SLEEPING AND WATCHING

I

SLEEP on, baby, on the floor,
Tired of all the playing,—
Sleep with smile the sweeter for
That you dropped away in!
On your curls' full roundness, stand
Golden lights serenely—
One cheek pushed out by the hand
Folds the dimple inly:
Little head and little foot
Heavy laid for pleasure,
Underneath the lids half-shut,
Slants the shining azure;—
Open-soul in noonday sun,
So, you lie and slumber!
Nothing evil having done,
Nothing can encumber.

II

I, who cannot sleep as well,
Shall I sigh to view you?
Or sigh further to foretell
All that may undo you?
Nay, keep smiling, little child,
Ere the sorrow neareth,—
I will smile too. Patience mild
Pleasure's token weareth.
Nay, keep sleeping before loss;
I shall sleep though losing!
As by cradle, so by cross,
Sure is the reposing.

III

And God knows Who sees us twain,
Child at childish leisure,
I am near as tired of pain
As you seem of pleasure;—
Very soon too, by His grace
Gently wrapt around me,
Shall I show as calm a face,
Shall I sleep as soundly!

Differing in this, that you
Clasp your playthings sleeping.
While my hand shall drop the faw
Given to my keeping!
Differing in this, that I
Sleeping shall be colder,
And in waking presently,
Brighter to beholder!
Differing in this beside
(Sleeper, have you heard me?
Do you move, and open wide
Eyes of wonder toward me?)—
That while you I thus recall
From your sleep,—I solely,—
Me from mine an angel shall,
With reveillie holy!

WINE OF CYPRUS

GIVEN TO ME BY H. S. BOYD, ESQ.,
AUTHOR OF "SELECT PASSAGES
FROM THE GREEK FATHERS,"
ETC.,

To whom these stanzas are addressed

I

If old Bacchus were the speaker
He would tell you with a sigh,
Of the Cyprus in this beaker
I am sipping like a fly,—
Like a fly or gnat on Ida
At the hour of goblet-pledge,
By Queen Juno blushed aside, a
Full white arm-sweep, from the
edge.

II

Sooth, the drinking should be ampler,
When the drink is so divine;
And some deep-mouthed Greek ex-
ampler
Would become your Cyprus wine!
Cyclop's mouth might plunge aright
in,
While his one eye over-leered—
Nor too large were mouth of Titan,
Drinking rivers down his beard.

III

Pan might dip his head so deep in,
That his ears alone pricked out,
Fauns around him, pressing, leaping,
Each one pointing to his throat:
While the Naiads like Bacchantes,
Wild, with urns thrown out to
waste,

Cry,—“O earth, that thou wouldst
grant us
Springs to keep, of such a taste!”

IV

But for me, I am not worthy
After gods and Greeks to drink;
And my lips are pale and earthy
To go bathing from this brink.
Since you heard them speak the last
time,
They have faded from their blooms,
And the laughter of my pastime
Has learnt silence at the tombs.

V

Ah, my friend! the antique drinkers
Crowned the cup and crowned the
brow.
Can I answer the old thinkers
In the forms they thought of, now?
Who will fetch from garden-closes
Some new garlands while I speak,
That the forehead, crowned with
roses,
May strike scarlet down the cheek?

VI

Do not mock me! with my mortal,
Suits no wreath again, indeed!
I am sad-voiced as the turtle
Which Anacreon used to feed;
Yet as that same bird demurely
Wet her beak in cup of his,—
So, without a garland, surely
I may touch the brim of this.

VII

Go!—let others praise the Chian!—
This is soft as Muses' string—
This is tawny as Rhea's lion,
This is rapid as its spring,—
Bright as Paphia's eyes e'er met us,
Light as ever trod her feet!
And the brown bees of Hymettus
Make their honey not so sweet.

VIII

Very copious are my praises,
Though I sip it like a fly!—
Ah—but, sipping,—times and places
Change before me suddenly—
As Ulysses' old libation
Drew the ghosts from every part,
So your Cyprus wine, dear Grecian,
Stirs the Hades of my heart.

IX

And I think of those long mornings
Which my thought goes far to seek,

When, betwixt the folio's turnings,
Solemn flowed the rhythmic Greek.
Past the pane, the mountain spreading,
Swept the sheep-bell's tinkling
noise,

While a girlish voice was reading,—
Somewhat low for *ai's* and *oi's*.

X

Then what golden hours were for us!—
While we sate together there,
How the white vests of the chorus
Seemed to wave up a live air!
How the cothurns trod majestic
Down the deep iambic lines;
And the rolling anapaestic
Curled like vapour over shrines!

XI

Oh, our Æschylus, the thunderous!
How he drove the bolted breath
Through the cloud, to wedge it pon-
derous
In the gnarled oak beneath.
Oh, our Sophocles, the royal,
Who was born to monarch's place—
And who made the whole world loyal,
Less by kingly power than grace.

XII

Our Euripides, the human—
With his droppings of warm tears;
And his touches of things common,
Till they rose to touch the spheres!
Our Theocritus, our Bion,
And our Pindar's shining goals!—
These were cup-bearers undying,
Of the wine that's meant for souls.

XIII

And my Plato, the divine one,—
If men know the gods aright
By their motions as they shine on
With a glorious trail of light!—
And your noble Christian bishops,
Who mouthed grandly the last
Greek:

Though the sponges on their hyssops
Were distent with wine—too weak.

XIV

Yet, your Chrysostom, you praised
him,
With his liberal mouth of gold;
And your Basil, you upraised him
To the height of speakers old:
And we both praised Heliodorus
For his secret of pure lies;—
Who forged first his linked stories
In the heat of lady's eyes.

XV

And we both praised your Synesius
For the fire shot up his odes,
Though the Church was scarce propi-
tious

As he whistled dogs and gods.—
And we both praised Nazianzen
For the fervid heart and speech;
Only I eschewed his glancing
At the lyre hung out of reach.

XVI

Do you mind that deed of Até
Which you bound me to so fast,—
Reading "De Virginitate,"
From the first line to the last?
How I said at ending, solemn,
As I turned and looked at you,
That St. Simeon on the column
Had had somewhat less to do?

XVII

For we sometimes gently wrangled;
Very gently, be it said,—
Since our thoughts were disentangled
By no breaking of the thread!
And, I charged you with extortions
On the nobler fames of old—
Ay, and sometimes thought your Por-
sons
Stained the purple they would fold.

XVIII

For the rest—a mystic moaning
Kept Cassandra at the gate,
With wild eyes the vision shone in—
And wide nostrils scenting fate.
And Prometheus, bound in passion
By brute Force to the blind stone,
Showed us looks of invocation
Turned to ocean and the sun.

XIX

And Medea we saw burning
At her nature's planted stake;
And proud Œdipus fate-scorning
While the cloud came on to break—
While the cloud came on slow—slower,
Till he stood discrowned, re-
signed!—

But the reader's voice dropped lower
When the poet called him BLIND!

XX

Ah, my gossip! you were older,
And more learned, and a man!—
Yet that shadow—the enfolder
Of your quiet eyelids—ran
Both our spirits to one level,
And I turned from hill and lea

And the sunnier-sun's green revel,—
To your eyes that could not see.

XXI

Now Christ bless you with the one
light
Which goes shining night and day!
May the flowers which grow in sun-
light
Shed their fragrance in your way!
Is it not right to remember
All your kindness, friend of mine,
When we two sate in the chamber,
And the poets poured us wine?

XXII

So, to come back to the drinking
Of this Cyprus,—it is well—
But those memories, to my thinking,
Make a better oenomei;
And whoever be the speaker,
None can murmur with a sigh—
That, in drinking from *that* beaker,
I am sipping like a fly.

THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST

"So the dreams depart,
So the fading phantoms flee,
And the sharp reality
Now must act its part."
—Westwood's *Beads from a Rosary*.

I

LITTLE Ellie sits alone
'Mid the beeches of a meadow,
By a stream-side, on the grass,
And the trees are showering down
Doubles of their leaves in shadow,
On her shining hair and face.

II

She has thrown her bonnet by;
And her feet she has been dipping
In the shallow water's flow—
Now she holds them nakedly
In her hands, all sleek and dripping,
While she rocketh to and fro.

III

Little Ellie sits alone,—
And the smile, she softly uses,
Fills the silence like a speech,
While she thinks what shall be
done,—

And the sweetest pleasure chooses,
For her future within reach.

IV

Little Ellie in her smile
Chooses . . . "I will have a lover,

Riding on a steed of steeds !
He shall love me without guile ;
And to *him* I will discover
That swan's nest among the reeds.

V

" And the steed shall be red-roan,
And the lover shall be noble,
With an eye that takes the
breath,—
And the lute he plays upon,
Shall strike ladies into trouble,
As his sword strikes men to death.

VI

" And the steed it shall be shod
All in silver, housed in azure,
And the mane shall swim the wind ;
And the hoofs along the sod
Shall flash onward and keep measure,
Till the shepherds look behind.

VII

" But my lover will not prize
All the glory that he rides in,
When he gazes in my face.
He will say, ' O Love, thine eyes
Build the shrine my soul abides in,
And I kneel here for thy grace.'

VIII

" Then, ay, then—he shall kneel
low,—
With the red-roan steed anear him
Which shall seem to understand—
Till I answer, ' Rise and go !
For the world must love and fear him
Whom I gift with heart and hand.'

IX

" Then he will arise so pale,
I shall feel my own lips tremble
With a yes I must not say—
Nathless, maiden-brave, ' Fare-
well,'
I will utter, and dissemble—
' Light to-morrow with to-day.'

X

" Then he will ride through the hills
To the wide world past the river,
There to put away all wrong ;
To make straight distorted wills,
And to empty the broad quiver
Which the wicked bear along.

XI

" Three times shall a young foot-
page
Swim the stream and climb the
mountain

And kneel down beside my feet—
' Lo ! my master sends this gage,
Lady, for thy pity's counting !
What wilt thou exchange for it ?'

XII

" And the first time, I will send
A white rosebud for a guerdon,—
And the second time, a glove :
But the third time—I may bend
From my pride, and answer—' Par-
don—
If he comes to take my love.'

XIII

" Then the young foot-page will
run—
Then my lover will ride faster
Till he kneeleth at my knee :
' I am a duke's eldest son !
Thousand serfs do call me master,—
But, O love, I love but *thee* !'

XIV

" He will kiss me on the mouth
Then, and lead me as a lover
Through the crowds that praise his
deeds :
And, when soul-tied by one troth,
Unto *him* I will discover
That swan's nest among the reeds."

XV

Little Ellie, with her smile
Not yet ended, rose up gaily,—
Tied the bonnet, donned the
shoe—
And went homeward, round a mile,
Just to see, as she did daily,
What more eggs were with the
two.

XVI

Pushing through the elm-tree copse,
Winding up the stream, light-
hearted,
Where the osier pathway leads—
Past the boughs she stoops—and
stops :
Lo ! the wild swan had deserted—
And a rat had gnawed the reeds.

XVII

Ellie went home sad and slow.
If she found the lover ever,
With his red-roan steed of steeds,
Sooth I know not ! but I know
She could never show him—never,
That swan's nest among the reeds !

LESSONS FROM THE GORSE

"To win the secret of a weed's plain heart."
LOWELL.

I

MOUNTAIN gorses, ever golden,
Cankered not the whole year
long!

Do ye teach us to be strong,
Howsoever pricked and holden
Like your thorny blooms, and so
Trodden on by rain and snow,
Up the hill-side of this life, as bleak as
where ye grow?

II

Mountain blossoms, shining blossoms!

Do ye teach us to be glad
When no summer can be had,
Blooming in our inward bosoms?
Ye, whom God preserveth still,
Set as lights upon a hill,
Tokens to the wintry earth that
Beauty liveth still!

III

Mountain gorses, do ye teach us
From that academic chair
Canopied with azure air,
That the wisest word man reaches
Is the humblest he can speak?
Ye, who live on mountain peak
Yet live low along the ground, beside
the grasses meek!

IV

Mountain gorses, since Linnæus
Knelt beside you on the sod,
For your beauty thanking God,—
For your teaching ye should see

us

Bowing in prostration new!
Whence arisen,—if one or two
Drops be on our cheeks—O world!
they are not tears, but dew.

THE DEAD PAN

Excited by Schiller's *Götter Griechenlands*, and partly founded on a well-known tradition mentioned in a treatise of Plutarch (*De Oraculorum Defectu*), according to which, at the hour of the Saviour's agony, a cry of "Great Pan is dead!" swept across the waves in the hearing of certain mariners,—and the oracles ceased.

It is in all veneration to the memory of the deathless Schiller, that I oppose a doctrine still more dishonouring to poetry than to Christianity.
—E. B. B.

I

Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,
Can ye listen in your silence?

Can your mystic voices tell us
Where ye hide? In floating islands,
With a wind that evermore
Keeps you out of sight of shore?
Pan, Pan is dead.

II

In what revels are ye sunken
In old Æthiopia?
Have the pygmies made you drunken,
Bathing in mandragora
Your divine pale lips that shiver
Like the lotus in the river?
Pan, Pan is dead.

III

Do ye sit there still in slumber,
In gigantic Alpine rows?
The black poppies out of number
Nodding, dripping from your brows
To the red lees of your wine,—
And so kept alive and fine?
Pan, Pan is dead.

IV

Or lie crushed your stagnant corpses
Where the silver spheres roll on,
Stung to life by centric forces
Thrown like rays out from the sun?—
While the smoke of your old altars
Is the shroud that round you welters?
Great Pan is dead.

V

"Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,"
Said the old Hellenic tongue!
Said the hero-oaths, as well as
Poets' songs the sweetest sung!
Have ye grown deaf in a day?
Can ye speak not yea or nay—
Since Pan is dead?

VI

Do ye leave your rivers flowing
All alone, O Naiades,
While your drenched locks dry slow in
This cold feeble sun and breeze?—
Not a word the Naiads say,
Though the rivers run for aye.
For Pan is dead.

VII

From the gloaming of the oak-wood,
O ye Dryads, could ye flee?
At the rushing thunderstroke, would
No sob tremble through the tree?—
Not a word the Dryads say,
Though the forests wave for aye.
For Pan is dead.

VIII

Have ye left the mountain places,
Oreads wild, for other tryst?
Shall we see no sudden faces
Strike a glory through the mist?
Not a sound the silence thrills,
Of the everlasting hills.

Pan, Pan is dead,

IX

O twelve gods of Plato's vision,
Crowned to starry wanderings,—
With your chariots in procession,
And your silver clash of wings!
Very pale ye seem to rise,
Ghosts of Grecian deities—

Now Pan is dead.

X

Jove! that right hand is unloaded,
Whence the thunder did prevail,
While in idiocy of godhead
Thou art staring the stars pale!
And thine eagle, blind and old,
Roughs his feathers in the cold.

Pan, Pan is dead.

XI

Where, O Juno, is the glory
Of thy regal look and tread?
Will they lay, for evermore, thee
On thy dim, straight, golden bed?
Will thy queendom all lie hid
Meekly under either lid?

Pan, Pan is dead.

XII

Ha, Apollo! Floats his golden
Hair all mist-like where he stands,
While the Muses hang enfolding
Knee and foot with faint wild hands?
'Neath the clanging of thy bow,
Niobe looked lost as thou!

Pan, Pan is dead.

XIII

Shall the casque with its brown iron,
Pallas' broad blue eyes, eclipse,
And no hero take inspiring
From the God-Greek of her lips?
'Neath her olive dost thou sit,
Mars the mighty, cursing it?

Pan, Pan is dead.

XIV

Bacchus, Bacchus! on the panther
He swoons,—bound with his own
vines!
And his Mænads slowly saunter,
Head aside, among the pines,

B.P.

While they murmur dreamingly,—
"Evohe—ah—evohe—!"

Ah, Pan is dead.

XV

Neptune lies beside the trident,
Dull and senseless as a stone;
And Old Pluto deaf and silent
Is cast out into the sun:
Ceres smileth stern thereat,—
"We *all* now are desolate—

Now Pan is dead."

XVI

Aphrodite! dead and driven
As thy native foam, thou art;
With the cestus long done heaving
On the white calm of thine heart!
Ai Adonis! At that shriek,
Not a tear runs down her cheek—
Pan, Pan is dead.

XVII

And the Loves, we used to know from
One another,—huddled lie,
Frore as taken in a snow-storm,
Close beside her tenderly,—
As if each had weakly tried
Once to kiss her as he died.

Pan, Pan is dead.

XVIII

What, and Hermes? Time enthral-
leth

All thy cunning, Hermes, thus,—
And the ivy blindly crawleth
Round thy brave caduceus?
Hast thou no new message for us,
Full of thunder and Jove-glories?
Nay! Pan is dead.

XIX

Crownèd Cybele's great turret
Rocks and crumbles on her head:
Roar the lions of her chariot
Toward the wilderness, unfed;
Scornful children are not mute,—
"Mother, mother, walk a-foot—
Since Pan is dead."

XX

In the fiery-hearted centre
Of the solemn universe,
Ancient Vesta,—who could enter
To consume thee with this curse?
Drop thy grey chin on thy knee,
O thou palsied Mystery!

For Pan is dead.

T

XXI

Gods ! we vainly do adjure you,—
 Ye return nor voice nor sign !
 Not a votary could secure you
 Even a grave for your Divine !
 Not a grave, to show thereby,
" Here these grey old gods do lie."
 Pan, Pan is dead.

XXII

Even that Greece who took your
 wages,
 Calls the obolus outworn :
 And the hoarse deep-throated ages
 Laugh your godships unto scorn—
 And the poets do disclaim you,
 Or grow older if they name you—
 And Pan is dead.

XXIII

Gods bereaved, gods belated,
 With your purples rent asunder !
 Gods discrowned and desecrated,
 Disinherited of thunder !
 Now, the goats may climb and crop
 The soft grass on Ida's top—
 Now, Pan is dead.

XXIV

Calm, of old, the bark went onward,
 When a cry more loud than wind,
 Rose up, deepened, and swept sun-
 ward,
 From the piled Dark behind ;
 And the sun shrank and grew pale,
 Breathed against by the great wail—
" Pan, Pan is dead."

XXV

And the rowers from the benches
 Fell—each shuddering on his face,—
 While departing Influences
 Struck a cold back through the place ;
 And the shadow of the ship
 Reeled along the passive deep—
" Pan, Pan is dead."

XXVI

And that dismal cry rose slowly
 And sank slowly through the air,
 Full of spirit's melancholy
 And eternity's despair !
 And they heard the words it said—
*" PAN IS DEAD—GREAT PAN IS DEAD
 —PAN, PAN IS DEAD."*

XXVII

'Twas the hour when One in Sion
 Hung for love's sake on a cross—

When His brow was chill with dying,
 And His soul was faint with loss ;
 When His priestly blood dropped
 downward,
 And His kingly eyes looked throne-
 ward—

Then, Pan was dead.

XXVIII

By the love He stood alone in,
 His sole Godhead rose complete ;
 And the false gods fell down moaning,
 Each from off his golden seat—
 All the false gods with a cry
 Rendered up their deity—

Pan, Pan was dead.

XXIX

Wailing wide across the islands,
 They rent, vest-like, their Divine !
 And a darkness and a silence
 Quenched the light of every shrine ;
 And Dodona's oak swang lonely
 Henceforth, to the tempest only.

Pan, Pan was dead.

XXX

Pythia staggered,—feeling o'er her,
 Her lost god's forsaking look !
 Straight her eyeballs filmed with
 horror,
 And her crispy fillets shook—
 And her lips gasped through their
 foam,

For a word that did not come.

Pan, Pan was dead.

XXXI

O ye vain false gods of Hellas,
 Ye are silent evermore !
 And I dash down this old chalice,
 Whence libations ran of yore.
 See ! the wine crawls in the dust
 Wormlike—as your glories must !

Since Pan is dead.

XXXII

Get to dust, as common mortals,
 By a common doom and track !
 Let no Schiller from the portals
 Of that Hades, call you back,—
 Or instruct us to weep all
 At your antique funeral.

Pan, Pan is dead.

XXXIII

By your beauty, which confesses
 Some chief Beauty conquering you,—
 By our grand heroic guesses,

Through your falsehood, at the
True,—

We will weep *not* . . . ! earth shall
roll

Heir to each god's aureole—

And Pan is dead.

XXXIV

Earth outgrows the mythic fancies
Sung beside her in her youth :
And those debonair romances
Sound but dull beside the truth.
Phœbus' chariot-course is run.
Look up, poets, to the sun !

Pan, Pan is dead.

XXXV

Christ hath sent us down the angels ;
And the whole earth and the skies
Are illumed by altar-candles
Lit for blessed mysteries ;
And a Priest's hand, through creation,
Waveth calm and consecration—

And Pan is dead.

XXXVI

Truth is fair : should we forego it ?
Can we sigh right for a wrong ?
God Himself is the best Poet,
And the real is His song.
Sing His truth out fair and full,
And secure His beautiful.

Let Pan be dead.

XXXVII

Truth is large. Our aspiration
Scarce embraces half we be.
Shame ! to stand in His creation
And doubt Truth's sufficiency !—
To think God's song unexcelling
The poor tales of our own telling—

When Pan is dead.

XXXVIII

What is true and just and honest,
What is lovely, what is pure—
All of praise that hath admonisht,—
All of virtue, shall endure,—
These are themes for poets' uses,
Stirring nobler than the Muses—

Ere Pan was dead.

XXXIX

O brave poets, keep back nothing ;
Nor mix falsehood with the whole !
Look up Godward ! speak the truth in
Worthy song from earnest soul !
Hold, in high poetic duty,
Truest Truth the fairest Beauty !

Pan, Pan is dead.

HECTOR IN THE GARDEN

I

NINE years old ! The first of any
Seem the happiest years that
come :

Yet when I was nine, I said

No such word !—I thought, in-
stead,

That the Greeks had used as many
In besieging Ilium.

II

Nine green years had scarcely
brought me

To my childhood's haunted
spring :

I had life, like flowers and bees

In betwixt the country trees ;

And the sun the pleasure taught me
Which he teacheth every thing.

III

If the rain fell, there was sorrow ;—

Little head leant on the pane,

Little finger drawing down it

The long trailing drops upon it,—

And the " Rain, rain, come to-mor-
row,"

Said for charm against the rain.

IV

Such a charm was right Canidian,

Though you meet it with a jeer !

If I said it long enough,

Then the rain hummed dimly off,

And the thrush, with his pure Lydian,
Was left only, to the ear :

V

And the sun and I together

Went a-rushing out of doors ;

We, our tender spirits, drew

Over hill and dale in view,

Glimmering hither, glimmering thi-
ther,

In the footsteps of the showers.

VI

Underneath the chestnuts dripping,
Through the grasses wet and fair,
Straight I sought my garden-
ground

With the laurel on the mound,

And the pear-tree oversweeping

A side-shadow of green air.

VII

In the garden lay supinely

A huge giant wrought of spade !

Arms and legs were stretched at length
In a passive giant strength,—
And the meadow turf, cut finely,
Round them laid and interlaid.

VIII

Call him Hector, son of Priam !
Such his title and degree.
With my rake I smoothed his brow ;
Both his cheeks I weeded through ;
But a rhymers such as I am,
Scarce can sing his dignity.

IX

Eyes of gentianellas azure,
Staring, winking at the skies ;
Nose of gillyflowers and box ;
Scented grasses put for locks—
Which a little breeze, at pleasure,
Set a-waving round his eyes.

X

Brazen helm of daffodillies,
With a glitter toward the light ;
Purple violets, for the mouth,
Breathing perfumes west and south ;
And a sword of flashing lilies,
Holden ready for the fight.

XI

And a breastplate made of daisies,
Closely fitting, leaf by leaf ;
Periwinkles interlaced
Drawn for belt about the waist ;
While the brown bees, humming
praises,
Shot their arrows round the chief.

XII

And who knows (I sometimes wondered,)
If the disembodied soul
Of old Hector, once of Troy,
Might not take a dreary joy
Here to enter—if it thundered
Rolling up the thunder-roll ?

XIII

Rolling this way from Troy-ruin,
In this body rude and rife
He might enter, and take rest
'Neath the daisies of the breast—
They, with tender roots, renewing
His heroic heart to life.

XIV

Who could know ? I sometimes
started

At a motion or a sound !
Did his mouth speak—naming
Troy.

With an *orotototoi* ?

Did the pulse of the Strong-hearted
Make the daisies tremble round ?

XV

It was hard to answer, often :
But the birds sang in the tree—
But the little birds sang bold.
In the pear-tree green and old,
And my terror seemed to soften
Through the courage of their glee.

XVI

Oh, the birds, the tree, the ruddy
And white blossoms, sleek with
rain !

Oh, my garden, rich with pansies !
Oh, my childhood's bright ro-
mances !

All revive, like Hector's body,
And I see them stir again !

XVII

And despite life's changes—chances,
And despite the deathbell's toll,
They press on me in full seeming !—
Help, some angel ! stay this dream-
ing !

As the birds sang in the branches
Sing God's patience through my
soul !

XVIII

That no dreamer, no neglecter
Of the present's work unsped,
I may wake up and be doing,
Life's heroic ends pursuing,
Though my past is dead as Hector,
And though Hector is twice dead.

FLUSH OR FAUNUS

You see this dog. It was but yester-
day :

I mused forgetful of his presence here
Till thought on thought drew down-
ward tear on tear ;

When from the pillow, where wet-
cheeked I lay,

A head as hairy as Faunus, thrust its
way

Right sudden against my face,—two
golden-clear

Large eyes astonished mine,—a
drooping ear

Did flap me on either cheek, to dry
the spray !

I started first, as some Arcadian,
 Amazed by goatly god in twilight
 grove :
 But as my bearded vision closelier
 ran
 My tears off, I knew Flush, and rose
 above
 Surprise and sadness,—thanking the
 true PAN,
 Who, by low creatures, leads to heights
 of love.

FINITE AND INFINITE

THE wind sounds only in opposing
 straits,
 The sea, beside the shore ; man's
 spirit rends
 Its quiet only up against the ends
 Of wants and oppositions, loves and
 hates,
 Where worked and worn by passion-
 ate debates,
 And losing by the loss it apprehends,
 Its flesh rocks round, and every breath
 it sends
 Is ravelled to a sigh. All tortured
 states
 Suppose a straitened place. Jehovah
 Lord,
 Make room for rest, around me ! Out
 of sight
 Now float me, of the vexing land ab-
 horred !
 Till, in deep calms of space, my soul
 may right
 Her nature,—shoot large sail on
 lengthening cord,
 And rush exultant on the Infinite.

THE RUNAWAY SLAVE AT
PILGRIM'S POINT

I

I STAND on the mark beside the shore
 Of the first white pilgrim's bended
 knee,
 Where exile turned to ancestor,
 And God was thanked for liberty.
 I have run through the night, my
 skin is as dark,
 I bend my knee down on this mark . . .
 I look on the sky and the sea.

II

O pilgrim-souls, I speak to you !
 I see you come out proud and slow

From the land of the spirits pale as
 dew . . .

And round me and round me ye go !
 O pilgrims, I have gasped and run
 All night long from the whips of one
 Who in your names works sin and
 woe.

III

And thus I thought that I would come
 And kneel here where ye knelt be-
 fore,
 And feel your souls around me hum
 In undertone to the ocean's roar ;
 And lift my black face, my black
 hand,
 Here, in your names, to curse this land
 Ye blessed in freedom's evermore.

IV

I am black, I am black ;
 And yet God made me, they say.
 But if He did so, smiling back
 He must have cast His work away
 Under the feet of His white creatures,
 With a look of scorn,—that the
 dusky features
 Might be trodden again to clay.

V

And yet He has made dark things
 To be glad and merry as light.
 There's a little dark bird, sits and
 sings ;
 There's a dark stream ripples out of
 sight ;
 And the dark frogs chant in the safe
 morass,
 And the sweetest stars are made to
 pass
 O'er the face of the darkest night.

VI

But we who are dark, we are dark !
 Ah, God, we have no stars !
 About our souls in care and cark
 Our blackness shuts like prison
 bars :
 The poor souls crouch so far behind,
 That never a comfort can they find
 By reaching through the prison-
 bars.

VII

Indeed, we live beneath the sky, . . .
 That great smooth Hand of God
 stretched out
 On all His children fatherly
 To bless them from the fear and
 doubt

Which would be, if, from this low
place,
All opened straight up to His face
Into the grand eternity.

VIII

And still God's sunshine and His
frost,
They make us hot, they make us
cold,
As if we were not black and lost :
And the beasts and birds, in wood
and fold,

Do fear and take us for very men !
Could the whip-poor-Will or the cat of
the glen

Look into my eyes and be bold ?

IX

I am black, I am black !—
But, once, I laughed in girlish glee ;
For one of my colour stood in the
track
Where the drivers drove, and
looked at me—
And tender and full was the look he
gave :

Could a slave look *so* at another slave ?
I look at the sky and the sea.

X

And from that hour our spirits grew
As free as if unsold, unbought :
Oh, strong enough, since we were two,
To conquer the world, we thought !
The drivers drove us day by day ;
We did not mind, we went one way
And no better a freedom sought.

XI

In the sunny ground between the
canes,

He said " I love you " as he passed :
When the shingle-roof rang sharp
with the rains,

I heard how he vowed it fast :
While others shook he smiled in the
hut

As he carved me a bowl of the cocoa-
nut,
Through the roar of the hurricanes.

XII

I sang his name instead of a song ;
Over and over I sang his name—
Upward and downward I drew it
along

My various notes,—the same, the
same !

I sang it low, that the slave-girls near

Might never guess from aught they
could hear,
It was only a name—a name.

XIII

I look on the sky and the sea.
We were two to love, and two to
pray,—
Yes, two, O God, who cried to Thee,
Though nothing didst Thou say.
Coldly Thou sat'st behind the sun !
And now I cry who am but one,
How wilt Thou speak to-day ?—

XIV

We were black, we were black !—
We had no claim to love and bliss,
What marvel, if each turned to wrack ?
They wrung my cold hands out of
his,—

They dragged him . . . where ? . . .
I crawled to touch
His blood's mark in the dust ! . . .
not much,
Ye pilgrim-souls, . . . though plain
as *this* !

XV

Wrong, followed by a deeper wrong !
Mere grief's too good for such as I.
So the white men brought the shame
ere long
To strangle the sob of my agony.
They would not leave me for my dull
Wet eyes !—it was too merciful
To let me weep pure tears and die.

XVI

I am black, I am black !—
I wore a child upon my breast . . .
An amulet that hung too slack
And, in my unrest, could not rest :
Thus we went moaning, child and
mother,
One to another, one to another,
Until all ended for the best.

XVII

For hark ! I will tell you low . . .
low . . .

I am black, you see,—
And the babe who lay on my bosom
so,

Was far too white . . . too white
for me ;

As white as the ladies who scorned to
pray
Beside me at church but yesterday,
Though my tears had washed a
place for my knee.

XVIII

My own, own child ! I could not bear
To look in his face, it was so white.
I covered him up with a kerchief
there ;

I covered his face in close and tight :
And he moaned and struggled, as
well might be,
For the white child wanted his
liberty—
Ha, ha ! he wanted his master-
right.

XIX

He moaned and beat with his head
and feet,

His little feet that never grew—
He struck them out, as it was meet,
Against my heart to break it
through.

I might have sung and made him
mild—

But I dared not sing to the white-
faced child

The only song I knew.

XX

I pulled the kerchief very close :

He could not see the sun, I swear
More, then, alive, than now he does
From between the roots of the man-
go . . . where ?

. . . I know where. Close ! a child
and mother

Do wrong to look at one another,
When one is black and one is fair.

XXI

Why, in that single glance I had
Of my child's face, . . . I tell you
all,

I saw a look that made me mad . . .
The *master's* look, that used to fall
On my soul like his lash . . . or
worse !—

And so, to save it from my curse,
I twisted it round in my shawl.

XXII

And he moaned and trembled from
foot to head,

He shivered from head to foot ;
Till, after a time, he lay instead

Too suddenly still and mute.
I felt beside a stiffening cold, . . .
I dared to lift up just a fold . . .

As in lifting a leaf of the mango-
fruit

XXIII

But *my* fruit . . . ha, ha !—there,
had been

(I laugh to think on't at this
hour ! . . .)

Your fine white angels who have seen
Nearest the secret of God's
power, . . .

And plucked my fruit to make them
wine,

And sucked the soul of that child of
mine

As the humming-bird sucks the
soul of the flower.

XXIV

Ha, ha, the trick of the angels
white !

They freed the white child's spirit
so.

I said not a word, but, day and night,
I carried the body to and fro ;

And it lay on my heart like a stone
. . . as chill.

—The sun may shine out as much as
he will :

I am cold, though it happened a
month ago.

XXV

From the white man's house, and the
black man's hut,

I carried the little body on.

The forest's arms did round us shut,
And silence through the trees did
run :

They asked no question as I went,—
They stood too high for astonish-
ment,—

They could see God sit on His
throne.

XXVI

My little body, kerchiefed fast,
I bore it on through the forest . . .
on :

And when I felt it was tired at last,
I scooped a hole beneath the moon
Through the forest-tops the angels far
With a white sharp finger from every
star,

Did point and mock at what was
done.

XXVII

Yet when it was all done aright, . . .
Earth, 'twixt me and my baby,
strewed, . . .

All, changed to black earth, . . .
nothing white, . . .

A dark child in the dark,—ensued
Some comfort, and my heart grew
young :

I sate down smiling there and sung
The song I learnt in my maiden-
hood.

XXVIII

And thus we two were reconciled,
The white child and black mother,
thus :

For, as I sang it, soft and wild
The same song, more melodious,
Rose from the grave whereon I sate !
It was the dead child singing that,
To join the souls of both of us.

XXIX

I look on the sea and the sky !
Where the pilgrims' ships first
anchored lay

The free sun rideth gloriously,
But the pilgrim-ghosts have slid
away

Through the earliest streaks of the
morn.

My face is black, but it glares with a
scorn

Which they dare not meet by day.

XXX

Ah!—in their 'stead, their hunter
sons !

Ah, ah ! they are on me—they
hunt in a ring—

Keep off ! I brave you all at once—
I throw off your eyes like snakes
that sting !

You have killed the black eagle at
nest, I think :

Did you never stand still in your
triumph, and shrink

From the stroke of her wounded
wing ?

XXXI

(Man, drop that stone you dared to
lift !—)

I wish you who stand there five
a-breast,

Each, for his own wife's joy and gift,
A little corpse as safely at rest

As mine in the mangos !—Yes, but
she

May keep live babies on her knee,
And sing the song she likes the best,

XXXII

I am not mad : I am black.

I see you staring in my face—

I know you staring, shrinking back—

Ye are born of the Washington-
race :

And this land is the free America :
And this mark on my wrist . . .

(I prove what I say)

Ropes tied me up here to the flog-
ging-place.

XXXIII

You think I shrieked then ? Not a
sound !

I hung, as a gourd hangs in the sun.
I only cursed them all around

As softly as I might have done
My very own child !—From these
sands

Up to the mountains, lift your hands,
O slaves, and end what I begun !

XXXIV

Whips, curses ; these must answer
those !

For in this UNION, you have set
Two kinds of men in adverse rows,

Each loathing each : and all forget
The seven wounds in Christ's body
fair,

While He sees gaping everywhere
Our countless wounds that pay no
debt.

XXXV

Our wounds are different. Your
white men

Are, after all, not gods indeed,
Nor able to make Christs again

Do good with bleeding. *We* who
bleed . . .

Stand off ! *we* help not in our loss !
We are too heavy for our cross,

And fall and crush you and your
seed.

XXXVI

I fall, I swoon ! I look at the sky :

The clouds are breaking on my
brain ;

I am floated along, as if I should die
Of liberty's exquisite pain—

In the name of the white child, wait-
ing for me

In the death-dark where we may kiss
and agree,

White men, I leave you all curse-free
In my broken heart's disdain !

THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN

"φεῖ, φεῖ, τι προσδέρκεσθ' ἡ' ὀμῶσιν,
τέκνα."—MEDEA.

I

Do ye hear the children weeping, O
my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years?
They are leaning their young heads
against their mothers,—

And *that* cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the
meadows,

The young birds are chirping in the
nest,

The young fawns are playing with
the shadows,

The young flowers are blowing
toward the west—

But the young, young children, O my
brothers,

They are weeping bitterly!—
They are weeping in the playtime of
the others,

In the country of the free.

II

Do you question the young children
in the sorrow,

Why their tears are falling so?—

The old man may weep for his to-
morrow

Which is lost in Long Ago—

The old tree is leafless in the forest—

The old year is ending in the frost—

The old wound, if stricken, is the
sorest—

The old hope is hardest to be lost:
But the young, young children, O
my brothers,

Do you ask them why they
stand

Weeping sore before the bosoms of
their mothers,

In our happy Fatherland?

III

They look up with their pale and
sunken faces,

And their looks are sad to see,
For the man's hoary anguish draws
and presses

Down the cheeks of infancy—

"Your old earth," they say, "is very
dreary;"

"Our young feet," they say, "are
very weak!"

Few paces have we taken, yet are
weary—

Our grave-rest is very far to seek.
Ask the aged why they weep, and not
the children,

For the outside earth is cold,
And we young ones stand without, in
our bewildering,

And the graves are for the old.

I'

"True," say the children, "it may
happen

That we die before our time.

Little Alice died last year—the grave
is shapen

Like a snowball, in the rime.

We looked into the pit prepared to
take her—

Was no room for any work in the
close clay:

From the sleep wherein she lieth
none will wake her,

Crying, 'Get up, little Alice! it is
day.'

If you listen by that grave, in sun and
shower,

With your ear down, little Alice
never cries!—

Could we see her face, be sure we
should not know her,

For the smile has time for growing
in her eyes!

And merry go her moments, lulled
and stilled in

The shroud, by the kirk-chime!

It is good when it happens," say the
children,

"That we die before our time."

V

Alas, alas, the children! they are
seeking

Death in life, as best to have!

They are binding up their hearts
away from breaking,

With a cerement from the grave.

Go out, children, from the mine and
from the city—

Sing out, children, as the little
thrushes do—

Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-
cowslips pretty—

Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers
let them through!

But they answer, "Are your cow-
slips of the meadows

Like our weeds anear the mine ?
 Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-
 shadows,
 From your pleasures fair and fine !

VI

" For oh," say the children, " we are
 weary,
 And we cannot run or leap—
 If we cared for any meadows, it
 were merely

To drop down in them and sleep.
 Our knees tremble sorely in the
 stooping—

We fall upon our faces, trying to go ;
 And, underneath our heavy eyelids
 drooping,

The reddest flower would look as
 pale as snow.

For, all day, we drag our burden tiring
 Through the coal-dark, under-
 ground—

Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
 In the factories, round and round.

VII

" For, all day, the wheels are droning,
 turning,—

Their wind comes in our faces,—
 Till our hearts turn,—our head, with
 pulses burning,

And the walls turn in their
 places—

Turns the sky in the high window
 blank and reeling—

Turns the long light that drops
 adown the wall—

Turn the black flies that crawl along
 the ceiling—

All are turning, all the day, and we
 with all.—

And all day, the iron wheels are
 droning ;

And sometimes we could pray,
 ' O ye wheels ' (breaking out in a mad
 moaning),

' Stop ! be silent for to-day ! ' "

VIII

Ay ! be silent ! Let them hear each
 other breathing

For a moment, mouth to mouth—
 Let them touch each other's hands, in
 a fresh wreathing

Of their tender human youth !
 Let them feel that this cold metallic
 notion

Is not all the life God fashions or
 reveals—

Let them prove their living souls
 against the notion

That they live in you, or under
 you, O wheels !—

Still, all day, the iron wheels go on-
 ward,

Grinding life down from its mark ;
 And the children's souls, which God is
 calling sunward,

Spin on blindly in the dark.

IX

Now tell the poor young children, O
 my brothers,

To look up to Him and pray—
 So the blessed One, Who blesseth all
 the others,

Will bless them another day.
 They answer, " Who is God that He
 should hear us,

While the rushing of the iron wheels
 is stirred ?

When we sob aloud, the human crea-
 tures near us

Pass by, hearing not, or answer not
 a word ;

And we hear not (for the wheels in
 their resounding)

Strangers speaking at the door :
 Is it likely God, with angels singing
 round Him,

Hears our weeping any more ?

X

" Two words, indeed, of praying we
 remember,

And at midnight's hour of harm,
 ' Our Father,' looking upward in the
 chamber,

We say softly for a charm.¹
 We know no other words, except ' Our
 Father,'

And we think that, in some pause
 of angels' song,

God may pluck them with the silence
 sweet to gather,

And hold both within His right
 hand which is strong.

¹ A fact rendered pathetically historical by Mr. Horne's report of his commission. The name of the poet of " Orion " and " Cosmo de' Medici " has, however, a change of associations ; and comes in time to remind me that we have some noble poetic heat of literature still,—however we may be open to the reproach of being somewhat gelded in our humanity.

'Our Father !' If He heard us, He
would surely
(For they call Him good and mild)
Answer, smiling down the steep world
very purely,
'Come and rest with me, my child.'

XI

"But no!" say the children, weep-
ing faster,
"He is speechless as a stone;
And they tell us, of His image is the
master,

Who commands us to work on.
Go to!" say the children,—"Up in
Heaven,
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds
are all we find.

Do not mock us; grief has made us
unbelieving—

We look up for God, but tears have
made us blind."

Do you hear the children weeping and
disproving,

O my brothers, what ye preach?
For God's possible is taught by His
world's loving—

And the children doubt of each.

XII

And well may the children weep be-
fore you!

They are weary ere they run;
They have never seen the sunshine,
nor the glory

Which is brighter than the sun:
They know the grief of man, without
his wisdom;

They sink in man's despair, with-
out its calm—

Are slaves, without the liberty in
Christdom,—

Are martyrs, by the pang without
the palm,—

Are worn, as if with age, yet unre-
trievingly

The blessing of its memory cannot
keep,—

Are orphans of the earthly love and
heavenly:

Let them weep! let them weep!

XIII

They look up, with their pale and
sunken faces,

And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in
their places,

With eyes turned on Deity:—
"How long," they say, "how long,
O cruel nation,

Will you stand, to move the world,
on a child's heart,—

Stifle down with a mailed heel its
palpitation,

And tread onward to your throne
amid the mart?

Our blood splashes upward, O gold-
heaper,

And your purple shows your
path!

But the child's sob curses deeper in
the silence

Than the strong man in his
wrath!"

TWO SKETCHES

H.B.

I

THE shadow of her face upon the wall
May take your memory to the perfect
Greek,

But when you front her, you would
call the cheek

Too full, sir, for your models, if withal
That bloom it wears could leave you
critical,

And that smile reaching toward the
rosy streak:—

For one who smiles so, has no need to
speak

To lead your thoughts along, as steed
to stall!

A smile that turns the sunny side o'
the heart

On all the world, as if herself did win
By what she lavished on an open
mart.—

Let no man call the liberal sweetness,
sin,—

While friends may whisper, as they
stand apart,

"Methinks there's still some warmer
place within."

A.B.

II

Her azure eyes, dark lashes hold in
fee;

Her fair superfluous ringlets, without
check,

Drop after one another down her
neck,

As many to each cheek as you might
 see
 Green leaves to a wild rose. This
 sign outwardly,
 And a like woman-covering seems to
 deck
 Her inner nature. For she will not
 fleck
 World's sunshine with a finger. Sym-
 pathy
 Must call her in Love's name! and
 then, I know,
 She rises up, and brightens as she
 should,
 And lights her smile for comfort, and
 is slow
 In nothing of high-hearted fortitude.
 To smell this flower, come near it!
 such can grow
 In that sole garden where Christ's
 brow dropped blood.

MOUNTAINEER AND POET

THE simple goatherd, between Alp
 and sky,
 Seeing his shadow, in that awful tryst,
 Dilated to a giant's on the mist,
 Esteems not his own stature larger by
 The apparent image, but more pa-
 tiently
 Strikes his staff down beneath his
 clenching fist—
 While the snow-mountains lift their
 amethyst
 And sapphire crowns of splendour, far
 and nigh,
 Into the air around him. Learn from
 hence
 Meek morals, all ye poets, that pursue
 Your way still onward, up to emin-
 ence!
 Ye are not great, because creation
 drew
 Large revelations round your earliest
 sense,
 Nor bright, because God's glory shines
 for you.

THE POET

THE poet hath the child's sight in his
 breast,
 And sees all *new*. What oftenest he
 has viewed,
 He views with the first glory. Fair
 and good
 Pall never on him, at the fairest, best,

But stand before him holy and un-
 dressed
 In week-day false conventions such
 as would
 Drag other men down from the alti-
 tude
 Of primal types, too early dispossessed.
 Why, God would tire of all His
 heavens, as soon
 As thou, O godlike, childlike poet,
 didst,
 Of daily and nightly sights of sun and
 moon!
 And therefore hath He set thee in the
 midst,
 Where men may hear thy won-
 der's ceaseless tune,
 And praise His world for ever, as
 thou bidst.

HIRAM POWERS' GREEK SLAVE

THEY say Ideal Beauty cannot enter
 The house of anguish. On the thresh-
 hold stands
 An alien Image with enshackled
 hands,
 Called the Greek Slave! as if the
 artist meant her
 (That passionless perfection which he
 lent her,
 Shadowed, not darkened, where the
 sill expands)
 To, so, confront man's crimes in differ-
 ent lands
 With man's ideal sense. Pierce to the
 centre,
 Art's fiery finger!—and break up ere
 long
 The serfdom of this world! Appeal,
 fair stone,
 From God's pure heights of beauty
 against man's wrong!
 Catch up in thy divine face, not alone
 East griefs but West,—and strike and
 shame the strong,
 By thunders of white silence, over-
 thrown.

LIFE

EACH creature holds an insular
 point in space:
 Yet what man stirs a finger, breathes
 a sound,
 But all the multitudinous beings
 round.

In all the countless worlds, with time
and place
For their conditions, down to the
central base,
Thrill, haply, in vibration and re-
bound,
Life answering life across the vast
profound,
In full antiphony, by a common
grace!—
I think, this sudden joyaunce which
illumes
A child's mouth sleeping, unaware
may run
From some soul newly loosened from
earth's tombs.
I think, this passionate sigh, which
half-begun
I stifle back, may reach and stir the
plumes
Of God's calm angel standing in the
sun.

LOVE

We cannot live, except thus mutu-
ally,
We alternate, aware or unaware,
The reflex act of life: and when we
bear
Our virtue outward most impulsively,
Most full of invocation, and to be
Most instantly compellant, certes,
there
We live most life, whoever breathes
most air,
And counts his dying years by sun
and sea.
But when a soul, by choice and con-
science, doth
Throw out her full force on another
soul,
The conscience and the concentra-
tion both
Make mere life, Love. For life in
perfect whole
And aim consummated, is Love in
sooth,
As nature's magnet-heat rounds
pole with pole.

HEAVEN AND EARTH

"There was s^uence in heaven about the space of
half-an-hour."—REVELATION viii. 1.

GOD, Who, with thunders and great
voices kept

Beneath Thy throne, and stars most
silver-paced
Along the inferior gyres, and open-
faced
Melodious angels round,—canst in-
tercept
Music with music,—yet, at will, hast
swept
All back (said he in Patmos placed),
all back,
To fill the heavens with silence of the
waste
Which lasted half-an-hour!—Lo, I,
who have wept
All day and night, beseech Thee, by
my tears,
And by that dread response of curse
and groan
Men alternate across these hemi-
spheres,
Vouchsafe us such a half-hour's hush
alone,
In compensation for our noisy years!
As heaven has paused from song, let
earth, from moan.

THE PROSPECT

METHINKS we do as fretful children.
do,
Leaning their faces on the window-
pane
To sigh the glass dim with their own
breath's stain,
And shut the sky and landscape from
their view.
And thus, alas! since God the maker
drew
A mystic separation 'twixt those
twain,
The life beyond us, and our souls in
pain,
We miss the prospect which we're
called unto,
By grief we are fools to use. Be still
and strong,
O man, my brother! hold thy
sobbing breath,
And keep thy soul's large window
pure from wrong,—
That so, as life's appointment issueth,
Thy vision may be clear to watch
along
The sunset consummation-lights of
death.

HUGH STUART BOYD¹

HIS BLINDNESS

GOD would not let the spheric Lights
 accost
 This God-loved man, and bade the
 earth stand off
 With all her beckoning hills, whose
 golden stuff
 Under the feet of the royal sun is
 crossed.
 Yet such things were to him not
 wholly lost,—
 Permitted, with his wandering eyes
 light-proof,
 To catch fair visions, rendered full
 enough
 By many a ministrant accomplished
 ghost,—
 And seeing, to sounds of softly-
 turned book-leaves,
 Sappho's crown-rose, and Meleager's
 spring,
 And Gregory's starlight, on Greek-
 burnished-eyes!
 Till Sensual and Unsensual seemed
 one thing,
 Viewed from one level,—earth's
 reapers at the sheaves,
 Scarce plainer than Heaven's angels
 on the wing!

HUGH STUART BOYD

HIS DEATH, 1848

BELoved friend, who living many
 years
 With sightless eyes raised vainly to
 the sun,
 Didst learn to keep thy patient soul
 in tune
 To visible nature's elemental cheers!
 God has not caught thee to new
 hemispheres
 Because thou wast aweary of this
 one:—

¹ To whom was inscribed, in grateful affection, my poem of "Cyprus Wine." There comes a moment in life when even gratitude and affection turn to pain, as they do now with me. This excellent and learned man, enthusiastic for the good and the beautiful, and one of the most simple and upright of human beings, passed out of his long darkness through death in the summer of 1848: Dr. Adam Clarke's daughter and biographer, Mrs. Smith (happier in this than the absent), fulfilling a doubly filial duty as she sat by the death-bed of her father's friend and hers.

I think thine angel's patience first was
 done,
 And that he spake out with celestial
 tears,
 "Is it enough, dear God? then
 lighten so
 This soul that smiles in darkness!"
 Steadfast friend,
 Who never didst my heart or life
 misknow,
 Nor either's faults too keenly appre-
 hend,—
 How can I wonder when I see thee go
 To join the Dead found faithful to
 the end?

HUGH STUART BOYD

LEGACIES

THREE gifts the Dying left me,—
 Æschylus,
 And Gregory Nazianzen, and a
 clock
 Chiming the gradual hours out like
 a flock
 Of stars, whose motion is melodious.
 The books were those I used to read
 from, thus
 Assisting my dear teacher's soul to
 unlock
 The darkness of his eyes. Now,
 mine they mock,
 Blinded in turn, by tears! now,
 murmurous
 Sad echoes of my young voice, years
 ago,
 Intoning from these leaves the
 Grecian phrase,
 Return and choke my utterance.
 Books, lie down
 In silence of the shelf within my gaze!
 And thou, clock, striking the hour's
 pulses on,
 Chime in the day which ends these
 parting days!

FUTURE AND PAST

My future will not copy fair my past.
 I wrote that once; and, thinking at
 my side
 My ministering life-angel justified
 The word by his appealing look
 upcast
 To the white throne of God, I turned
 at last,
 And saw instead there, *thee*,—not
 unallied

To angels in thy soul ! Then I, long
tried
By natural ills, received the comfort
fast,
While budding at thy sight, my
pilgrim's staff
Gave out green leaves with morning
dews impearled.
—I seek no copy now of life's first
half !
Leave here the pages with long
musing curled,—
And write me new my future's
epigraph,
New angel mine, unhopd for in the
world !

CONFESSIONS

I

FACE to face in my chamber, my
silent chamber, I saw her !
God and she and I only, . . . there, I
sate down to draw her
Soul through the clefts of confession.
. . . Speak, I am holding thee
fast,
As the angels of resurrection shall do
it at the last.
" My cup is blood-red
With my sin," she said,
" And I pour it out to the
bitter lees,
As if the angels of judgment stood
over me strong at the last,
Or as thou wert as these ! "

II

When God smote His hands together,
and struck out thy soul as a
spark
Into the organised glory of things,
from deeps of the dark,—
Say, didst thou shine, didst thou burn,
didst thou honour the power in
the form,
As the star does at night, or the fire-
fly, or even the little ground-
worm ?
" I have sinned," she said,
" For my seed-light shed
Has smouldered away from
His first decrees !
The cypress praiseth the firefly, the
ground-leaf praiseth the worm :
I am viler than these ! "

III

When God on that sin had pity, and
did not trample thee straight
With His wild rains beating and
drenching thy light found inade-
quate ;
When He only sent thee the north-
winds, a little searching and
chill,
To quicken thy flame . . . didst
thou kindle and flash to the
heights of His will ?
" I have sinned," she said,
" Unquickened, unspread,
My fire dropt down, and I
wept on my knees !
I only said of His winds of the north
as I shrank from their chill, . . .
What delight is in these ? "

IV

When God on that sin had pity, and
did not meet it as such,
But tempered the wind to thy uses,
and softened the world to thy
touch,
At least thou wast moved in thy soul,
though unable to prove it afar,
Thou couldst carry thy light like a
jewel not giving it out like a star ?
" I have sinned," she said,
" And not merited
The gift He gives, by the grace
He sees !
The mine-cave praiseth the jewel, the
hill-side praiseth the star :—
I am viler than these ! "

V

Then I cried aloud in my passion, . . .
unthankful and impotent crea-
ture,
To throw up thy scorn unto God
through the rents in thy nature !
If He, the all-giving and loving, is
served so, what then
Hast thou done to the weak and the
changing, . . . thy fellows of men ?
" I have loved," she said,
(Words bowing her head
As the wind bows the wet
acacia-trees !)
" I saw God sitting above me,—but
I . . . I sate among men,
And I have loved these."

VI

Again with a lifted voice, . . . like a trumpet that takes
The low note of a viol that trembles,
and triumphing breaks
On the air with it, solemn and clear
. . . "I have sinned not in this !
Where I loved, I have loved much
and well,—I have loved not
amiss.

Let the living," she said,
"Enquire of the Dead,
In the house of the pale-
fronted Images,—
And my own true Dead will answer
for me, that I have not loved
amiss
In my love for all these.

VII

"The least touch of their hands in
the morning, I keep day and
night :

Their least step on the stair, still
throbs through me, if ever so
light :

Their least gift, which they left to my
childhood in long ago years,
Is now turned from a toy to a relic,
and gazed at through tears.

Dig the snow," she said,
"For my churchyard bed ;
Yet I, as I sleep, shall not fear
to freeze,
If one only of these my beloveds shall
love me with heart-warm tears,
As I have loved these !

VIII

"If I angered any among them, my
own life was sore ;
If I fell from their presence, I clung to
their memory more :
Their tender I often felt holy, their
bitter I sometimes called sweet,
And whenever their heart has re-
fused me, I fell down straight at
their feet.

I have loved," she said,—
"Man is weak, God is dread,
Yet the weakest man dies with
his spirit at ease,
Having poured such an oil of love
but once on the Saviour's feet,
As I lavished on these."

IX

Go, I cried, thou hast chosen the
Human, and left the Divine !
Then, at least, have the Human
shared with thee their wild-berry
wine ?

Have they loved back thy love, and
when strangers approached thee
with blame,

Have they covered thy fault with
their kisses, and loved thee the
same ?

But she wept and said,
"God, over my head,
Will sweep in the wrath of His
judgment seas,
If indeed He shall deal with me sin-
ning, but only the same,
And not gentler than these ! "

A SABBATH MORNING AT SEA

I

The ship went on with solemn face :
To meet the darkness on the deep,
The solemn ship went onward.
I bowed down weary in the place,
For parting tears and present sleep
Had weighed mine eyelids down-
ward.

II

Thick sleep, which shut all dreams
from me,
And kept my inner self apart
And quiet from emotion,
Then brake away and left me free,
Made conscious of a human heart
Betwixt the heaven and ocean.

III

The new sight, the new wondrous
sight !
The waters round me, turbulent,
The skies, impassive o'er me,
Calm in a moonless, sunless light,
As glorified by even the intent
Of holding the day-glory !

IV

Two pale thin clouds did stand upon
The meeting line of sea and sky,
With aspect still and mystic :
I think they did foresee the sun,
And rested on their prophecy
In quietude majestic ;

V

Then flushed to radiance where they stood,

Like statues by the open tomb
Of shining saints half risen.—
The sun!—he came up to be viewed,
And sky and sea made mighty room
To inaugurate the vision!

VI

I oft had seen the dawnlight run,
As red wine, through the hills, and break

Through many a mist's inurning;
But here, no earth profaned the sun!
Heaven, ocean, did alone partake
The sacrament of morning.

VII

Away with joys fantastical!
I would be humble to my worth,
Self-guarded if self-doubted.
Though here no earthly shadows fall,
I, joying, grieving without earth,
May desecrate without it.

VIII

God's Sabbath morning sweeps the waves:

I would not praise the pageant high
And miss the dedicature!
I, drawn down toward the sunless graves

By force of natural things,—should I
Exult in only nature?

IX

I could not bear to sit alone
In nature's fixed benignities
While my warm pulse was moving.

Too dark thou art, O glittering sun,
Too strait ye are, capacious seas,
To satisfy the loving.

X

It seems a better lot than so,
To sit with friends beneath the beech.

And call them dear and dearer;
Or follow children as they go
In pretty pairs, with softened speech

As the church-bells ring nearer.

XI

Love me, sweet friends, this Sabbath day.

The sea sings round me while ye roll
Afar the hymn unaltered,

B.P.

And kneel, where once I knelt, to pray,
And bless me deeper in the soul,
Because the voice has faltered.

XII

And though this Sabbath comes to me
Without the stoled minister,
And chanting congregation,
God's Spirit shall give comfort. He
Who brooded soft on waters drear,
Creator on creation,

XIII

He shall assist me to look higher,
Where keep the saints, with harp
and song,
An endless Sabbath morning,
And on that sea commixed with fire,
Oft drop their eyelids raised too long
To the full Godhead's burning.

HUMAN LIFE'S MYSTERY

I

We sow the glebe, we reap the corn,
We build the house where we may rest,
And then, at moments, suddenly,
We look up to the great wide sky,
Enquiring wherefore we were born . . .
For earnest, or for jest?

II

The senses folding thick and dark
About the stifled soul within,
We guess diviner things beyond,
And yearn to them with yearning fond;
We strike out blindly to a mark
Believed in, but not seen.

III

We vibrate to the pant and thrill
Wherewith Eternity has curled
In serpent-twined about God's seat!
While, freshening upward to His feet,
In gradual growth His full-leaved will
Expands from world to world.

IV

And, in the tumult and excess
Of act and passion under sun,
We sometimes hear—oh, soft and far,
As silver star did touch with star,
The kiss of Peace and Righteousness
Through all things that are done.

V

God keeps His holy mysteries
Just on the outside of man's dream!

U

In diapason slow, we think
To hear their pinions rise and sink,
While they float pure beneath His
eyes,
Like swans adown a stream.

VI
Abstractions, are they, from the forms
Of His great beauty?—exaltations
From His great glory?—strong pre-
visions
Of what we shall be?—intuitions
Of what we are—in calms and storms,
Beyond our peace and passions?

VII
Things nameless! which, in passing
so,
Do stroke us with a subtle grace.
We say, "Who passes?"—they are
dumb;
We cannot see them go or come;
Their touches fall soft—cold—assnow
Upon a blind man's face.

VIII
Yet, touching so, they draw above
Our common thoughts to Heaven's
unknown,—
Our daily joy and pain, advance
To a divine significance,—
Our human love—O mortal love,
That light is not its own!

IX
And, sometimes, horror chills our
blood
To be so near such mystic Things,
And we wrap round us, for defence,
Our purple manners, moods of sense—
As angels, from the face of God,
Stand hidden in their wings.

X
And, sometimes, through Life's heavy
swoon,
We grope for them!—with stran-
gled breath
We stretch our hands abroad and try
To reach them in our agony,—
And widen, so, the broad life-wound
Which soon is large enough for
death.

A CHILD'S THOUGHT OF GOD

I
THEY say that God lives very high!
But if you look above the pines,
You cannot see our God. And why?

II
And if you dig down in the mines
You never see Him in the gold,
Though, from Him, all that's glory
shines.

III
God is so good, He wears a fold
Of heaven and earth across His
face—
Like secrets kept, for love, untold.

IV
But still I feel that His embrace
Slides down by thrills through all
things made,
Through sight and sound of every
place;

V
As if my tender mother laid
On my shut lids, her kisses' pres-
sure,
Half-waking me at night, and said
"Who kissed you through the dark,
dear guesser?"

THE CLAIM

I
GRIEF sate upon a rock and sighed
one day:
(Sighing is all her rest!)
"Wellaway, wellaway, ah, wellaway!"
As ocean beat the stone, did she her
breast . . .
"Ah, wellaway! . . . ah me! alas,
ah me!"
Such sighing uttered she.

II
A Cloud spake out of heaven, as soft
as rain
That falls on water,—“Lo,
The Winds have wandered from me!
I remain
Alone in the sky-waste, and cannot
go
To lean my whiteness on the moun-
tain blue
Till wanted for more dew.

III
“The Sun has struck my brain to
weary peace,
Whereby constrained and pale
I spin for him a larger golden fleece
Than Jason's, yearning for as full a
sail!

Sweet Grief, when thou hast sighed
to thy mind,
Give me a sigh for wind,

IV

"And let it carry me adown the
west!"

But Love, who, prostrated,
Lay at Grief's foot, . . . his lifted
eyes possessed
Of her full image, . . . answered in
her stead;

"Now nay, now nay! she shall not
give away

What is my wealth, for any Cloud that
flieth.

Where Grief makes moan,

Love claims his own!

And therefore do I lie here night and
day,

And eke my life out with the breath
she sigheth."

LIFE AND LOVE

I

Fast this Life of mine was dying,
Blind already and calm as death,
Snowflakes on her bosom lying
Scarcely heaving with the breath.

II

Love came by, and, having known her
In a dream of fabled lands,
Gently stooped, and laid upon her
Mystic chrism of holy hands;

III

Drew his smile across her folded
Eyelids, as the swallow dips, . . .
Breathed as finely as the cold did,
Through the locking of her lips.

IV

So, when Life looked upward, being
Warmed and breathed on from
above,

What sight could she have for seeing,
Evermore . . . but only Love?

INCLUSIONS

I

Oh, wilt thou have my hand, Dear, to
lie along in thine?

As a little stone in a running stream,
it seems to lie and pine!

Now drop the poor pale hand, Dear,
. . . unfit to plight with thine.

II

Oh, wilt thou have my cheek, Dear,
drawn closer to thine own?

My cheek is white, my cheek is worn,
by many a tear run down.

Now leave a little space, Dear, . . .
lest it should wet thine own.

III

Oh, must thou have my soul, Dear,
commingled with thy soul?—

Red grows the cheek, and warm the
hand, . . . the part is in the
whole! . . .

Nor hands nor cheeks keep separate
when soul is joined to soul.

INSUFFICIENCY

I

THERE is no one beside thee, and no
one above thee;

Thou standest alone, as the night-
ingale sings!

And my words that would praise
thee, are impotent things,

For none can express thee, though all
should approve thee!

I love thee so, Dear, that I only can
love thee.

II

Say, what can I do for thee? . . .
weary thee . . . grieve thee?

Lean on thy shoulder . . . new
burdens to add? . . .

Weep my tears over thee . . .
making thee sad?

Oh, hold me not—love me not! let me
retrieve thee!

I love thee so, Dear, that I only can
leave thee.

SONG OF THE ROSE

ATTRIBUTED TO SAPPHO

If Zeus chose us a King of the flowers
in his mirth,

He would call to the rose, and
would royally crown it,

For the rose, ho, the rose! is the grace
of the earth,

Is the light of the plants that are
growing upon it!

For the rose, ho, the rose! is the eye
of the flowers,

Is the blush of the meadows that
feel themselves fair,—

Is the lightning of beauty, that strikes
through the bowers
On pale lovers who sit in the glow
unaware.

Ho, the rose breathes of love! ho, the
rose lifts the cup

To the red lips of Cypris invoked
for a guest!

Ho, the rose having curled its sweet
leaves for the world

Takes delight in the motion its petals
keep up,

As they laugh to the Wind as it
laughs from the west.

From Achilles Tatius.

A DEAD ROSE

I

O ROSE! who dares to name thee?
No longer roseate now, nor soft, nor
sweet,

But pale, and hard, and dry, as
stubble-wheat,—

Kept seven years in a drawer—thy
titles shame thee.

II

The breeze that used to blow thee,
Between the hedge-row thorns, and
take away

An odour up the lane to last all day,—
If breathing now,—unsweetened
would forego thee.

III

The sun that used to smite thee,
And mix his glory in thy gorgeous
urn

Till beam appeared to bloom, and
flower to burn,—

If shining now,—with not a hue
would light thee.

IV

The dew that used to wet thee,
And, white first, grow incarnadined,
because

It lay upon thee where the crimson
was,—

If dropping now,—would darken
where it met thee.

V

The fly that lit upon thee,
To stretch the tendrils of its tiny feet
Along thy leaf's pure edges after
heat,—

If lighting now,—would coldly
overrun thee.

VI

The bee that once did suck thee,
And build thy perfumed ambers up
his hive,

And swoon in thee for joy, till scarce
alive,—

If passing now,—would blindly
overlook thee.

VII

The heart doth recognise thee,
Alone, alone! the heart doth smell
thee sweet,

Doth view thee fair, doth judge thee
most complete,—

Though seeing now those changes
that disguise thee.

VIII

Yes, and the heart doth owe thee
More love, dead rose! than to such
roses bold

As Julia wears at dances, smiling
cold!—

Lie still upon this heart—which
breaks below thee!

A WOMAN'S SHORTCOMINGS

I

SHE has laughed as softly as if she
sighed;

She has counted six and over,
Of a purse well filled, and a heart well
tried—

Oh, each a worthy lover!
They "give her time," for her soul
must slip

Where the world has set the groov-
ing;

She will lie to none with her fair red
lip—

But love seeks truer loving.

II

She trembles her fan in a sweetness
dumb,

As her thoughts were beyond re-
calling,

With a glance for *one*, and a glance
for *some*,

From her eyelids rising and falling;
—Speaks common words with a blush-
ful air,

—Hears bold words, unrepining;
But her silence says—what she never
will swear—

And love seeks better loving.

III

Go, lady! lean to the night-guitar,
And drop a smile to the bringer;
Then smile as sweetly, when he is far,
At the voice of an in-door singer!
Bask tenderly beneath tender eyes;
Glance lightly, on their removing;
And join new vows to old perjuries—
But dare not call it loving!

IV

Unless you can think, when the song
is done,
No other is soft in the rhythm;
Unless you can feel, when left by
one,
That all men beside go with him;
Unless you can know, when unpraised
by his breath,
That your beauty itself wants
proving;
Unless you can swear—"For life, for
death!"—
Oh, fear to call it loving!

V

Unless you can muse in a crowd all
day,
On the absent face that fixed you;
Unless you can love, as the angels
may,
With the breadth of heaven be-
twixt you;
Unless you can dream that his faith is
fast,
Through behoving and unbehoving;
Unless you can *die* when the dream is
past—
Oh, never call it loving!

A MAN'S REQUIREMENTS

I

Love me, sweet, with all thou art,
Feeling, thinking, seeing,—
Love me in the lightest part,
Love me in full being.

II

Love me with thy open youth
In its frank surrender;
With the vowing of thy mouth,
With its silence tender.

III

Love me with thine azure eyes,
Made for earnest granting!
Taking colour from the skies,
Can Heaven's truth be wanting?

IV

Love me with their lids, that fall
Snow-like at first meeting;
Love me with thine heart, that all
The neighbours then see beating.

V

Love me with thine hand stretched out
Freely—open-minded;
Love me with thy loitering foot,—
Hearing one behind it.

VI

Love me with thy voice, that turns:
Sudden faint above me;
Love me with thy blush that burns:
When I murmur "*Love me!*"

VII

Love me with thy thinking soul—
Break it to love-sighing;
Love me with thy thoughts that roll
On through living—dying.

VIII

Love me in thy gorgeous airs,
When the world has crowned thee;
Love me, kneeling at thy prayers,
With the angels round thee.

IX

Love me pure, as musers do,
Up the woodlands shady:
Love me gaily, fast, and true,
As a winsome lady.

X

Through all hopes that keep us brave,
Further off or nigher,
Love me for the house and grave,—
And for something higher.

XI

Thus, if thou wilt prove me, dear,
Woman's love no fable,
I will love thee—half-a-year—
As a man is able.

A YEAR'S SPINNING

I

He listened at the porch that day
To hear the wheel go on, and on,
And then it stopped—ran back
away—
While through the door he brought
the sun:
But now my spinning is all done.

II

He sate beside me, with an oath
That love ne'er ended, once begun;

I smiled—believing for us both,
What was the truth for only one.
And now my spinning is all done.

III

My mother cursed me that I heard
A young man's wooing as I spun.
Thanks, cruel mother, for that word,
For I have, since, a harder known !
And now my spinning is all done.

IV

I thought—O God !—my first-born's
cry
Both voices to my ear would drown:
I listened in mine agony—
It was the *silence*, made me groan !
And now my spinning is all done.

V

Bury me 'twixt my mother's grave,
Who cursed me on her death-bed
lone,
And my dead baby's—(God it save !)
Who, not to bless me, would not
moan.
And now my spinning is all done.

VI

A stone upon my heart and head,
But no name written on the stone !
Sweet neighbours ! whisper low in-
stead,

" This sinner was a loving one—
And now her spinning is all done."

VII

And let the door ajar remain,
In case he should pass by anon ;
And leave the wheel out very plain,
That HE, when passing in the sun,
May see the spinning is all done.

CHANGE UPON CHANGE

I

FIVE months ago, the stream did flow,
The lilies bloomed within the sedge ;
And we were lingering to and fro,—
Where none will track thee in this
snow,

Along the stream, beside the hedge.
Ah, sweet, be free to love and go !
For if I do not hear thy foot,
The frozen river is as mute,—
The flowers have dried down to
the root :

And why, since these be changed
since May,
Shouldst thou change less than
they ?

II

And slow, slow, as the winter snow,
The tears have drifted to mine eyes ;
And my poor cheeks, five months ago,
Set blushing at thy praises so,
Put paleness on for a disguise.
Ah, sweet, be free to praise and go !
For if my face is turned to pale,
It was thine oath that first did
fail,—

It was thy love proved false and
frail !

And why, since these be changed,
enow,
Should I change less than thou ?

THAT DAY

I

I STAND by the river where both of us
stood,
And there is but one shadow to darken
the flood ;
And the path leading to it, where both
used to pass,
Has the step but of one, to take dew
from the grass,—
One forlorn since that day.

II

The flowers of the margin are many
to see,
For none stoops at my bidding to
pluck them for me ;
The bird in the alder sings loudly
and long,
For my low sound of weeping dis-
turbs not his song,
As thy vow did that day !

III

I stand by the river—I think of the
vow—
Oh, calm as the place is, vow-breaker,
be thou !
I leave the flower growing—the bird,
unreproved ;—
Would I trouble thee rather than
them, my beloved,
And my lover that day ?

IV

Go ! be sure of my love—by that
treason forgiven ;
Of my prayers—by the blessings they
win thee from Heaven ;
Of my grief—(guess the length of the
sword by the sheath's)

By the silence of life, more pathetic
than death's !

Go,—be clear of that day !

A REED

I

I AM no trumpet, but a reed :
No flattering breath shall from me lead
A silver sound, a hollow sound !
I will not ring, for priest or king,
One blast that in re-echoing
Would leave a bondsman faster
bound.

II

I am no trumpet, but a reed,—
A broken reed, the wind indeed
Left flat upon a dismal shore ;
Yet if a little maid, or child,
Should sigh within it, earnest-mild,
This reed will answer evermore.

III

I am no trumpet, but a reed :
Go, tell the fishers, as they spread
Their nets along the river's edge,—
I will not tear their nets at all,
Nor pierce their hands—if they should
fall ;
Then let them leave me in the sedge.

A CHILD'S GRAVE AT FLORENCE

A.A.E.C.

BORN, JULY, 1848.

DIED, NOVEMBER, 1849.

I

Of English blood, of Tuscan birth, . . .
What country should we give her ?
Instead of any on the earth,
The civic Heavens receive her.

II

And here, among the English tombs,
In Tuscan ground we lay her,
While the blue Tuscan sky endomes
Our English words of prayer.

III

A little child !—how long she lived,
By months, not years, is reckoned :
Born in one July, she survived
Alone to see a second.

IV

Bright-featured, as the July sun
Her little face, still played in,
And splendours, with her birth begun,
Had had no time for fading.

V

So, LILY, from those July hours,
No wonder we should call her ;
She looked such kinship to the
flowers . . .
Was but a little taller.

VI

A Tuscan Lily,—only white . . .
As Dante, in abhorrence
Of red corruption, wished aright
The lilies of his Florence.

VII

We could not wish her whiter . . .
her
Who perfumed with pure blossom
The house !—a lovely thing to wear
Upon a mother's bosom !

VIII

This July creature thought perhaps
Our speech not worth assuming :
She sate upon her parents' laps,
And mimicked the gnat's humming ;

IX

. . . Said " Father," " Mother " !—
then, left off ;
For tongues celestial, fitter.
Her hair had grown just long enough
To catch Heaven's jasper-glitter.

X

Babes ! Love could always hear and
see
Behind the cloud that hid them :
" Let little children come to Me,
And do not thou forbid them."

XI

So, unforbidding, have we met,
And gently here have laid her,
Though winter is no time to get
The flowers that should o'erspread
her.

XII

We should bring pansies quick with
spring,
Rose, violet, daffodilly,
And also, above everything,
White lilies for our Lily.

XIII

Nay, more than flowers, this grave
exacts . . .
Glad, grateful attestations
Of her sweet eyes and pretty acts,—
With calm renunciations.

XIV

Her very mother with light feet
Should leave the place too earthy,
Saying, "The angels have thee, sweet,
Because we are not worthy."

XV

But winter kills the orange buds,—
The gardens in the frost are ;
And all the heart dissolves in floods,
Remembering we have lost her !

XVI

Poor earth, poor heart !—too weak,
too weak,
To miss the July shining !
Poor heart !—what bitter words we
speak,
When God speaks of resigning !

XVII

Sustain this heart in us that faints,
Thou God, the Self-Existent !
We catch up wild at parting saints,
And feel Thy Heaven too distant !

XVIII

The wind that swept them out of sin,
Has ruffled all our vesture :
On the shut door that let them in,
We beat with frantic gesture,—

XIX

To us, us also—open straight !
The outer life is chilly—
Are *we*, too, like the earth, to wait
Till next year for our Lily ?

XX

—Oh, my own baby on my knees,
My leaping, dimpled treasure,—
At every word, I write like these,
Clasped close, with stronger pres-
sure !

XXI

Too well my own heart under-
stands . . .
At every word beats fuller . . .
My little feet, my little hands,
And hair of Lily's colour !

XXII

—But God gives patience, Love
learns strength,
And Faith remembers promise,
And Hope itself can smile at length
On other hopes gone from us.

XXIII

Love, strong as Death, shall conquer
Death,

Through struggle, made more
glorious :
This mother stills her sobbing breath,
Renouncing, yet victorious.

XXIV

Arms, empty of her child, she lifts,
With spirit unbereaven—
"God will not all take back His gifts ;
"My Lily's mine in Heaven !

XXV

"Still mine !—maternal rights serene
Not given to another !
The crystal bars shine-faint between
The souls of child and mother.

XXVI

"Meanwhile," the mother cries,
"content !
Our love was well divided :
Its sweetness following where she
went,
Its anguish stayed where I did.

XXVII

"Well done of God, to halve the lot,
And give her all the sweetness !
To us, the empty room and cot,—
To her, the Heaven's completeness.

XXVIII

"To us, this grave—to her, the rows
The mystic palm-trees spring in :
To us, the silence in the house—
To her, the choral singing !

XXIX

"For her, to gladden in God's view—
For us, to hope and bear on !—
Grow, Lily, in thy garden new,
Beside the Rose of Sharon.

XXX

"Grow fast in Heaven, sweet Lily
clipped,
In love more calm than this is,—
And may the angels dewy-lipped
Remind thee of our kisses !

XXXI

"While none shall tell thee of our
tears,
These human tears now falling,
Till, after a few patient years,
One home shall take us all in !"

XXXII

Child, father, mother—who, left
out ?
Not mother, and not father !—
And when, their dying couch about,
The natural mists shall gather,

XXXIII

Some smiling angel close shall stand,
In old Correggio's fashion,
Bearing a LILY in his hand,
For death's ANNUNCIATION.

SONNETS FROM THE
PORTUGUESE

I

I THOUGHT once how Theocritus had
sung
Of the sweet years, the dear and
wished for years,
Who each one in a gracious hand
appears
To bear a gift for mortals, old or
young:
And, as I mused it in his antique
tongue,
I saw, in gradual vision through my
tears,
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy
years, . . .
Those of my own life, who by turns
had flung
A shadow across me. Straightway
I was 'ware,
So weeping, how a mystic Shape did
move
Behind me, and drew me backward
by the hair;
And a voice said in mastery while I
strove, . . .
"Guess now who holds thee?"—
"Death!" I said. But, there,
The silver answer rang, . . . "Not
Death, but Love."

II

But only three in all God's universe
Have heard this word thou hast said;
Himself, beside
Thee speaking and me listening!
and replied
One of us . . . *that* was God! . . .
and laid the curse
So darkly on my eyelids as to amerce
My sight from seeing thee,—that if
I had died,
The deathweights, placed there,
would have signified
Less absolute exclusion. "Nay" is
worse
From God than from all others, O
my friend!
Men could not part us with their
worldly jars,

Nor the seas change us, nor the tem-
pests bend:
Our hands would touch for all the
mountain-bars,—
And, heaven being rolled between us
at the end,
We should but vow the faster for the
stars.

III

Unlike are we, unlike, O princely
Heart!
Unlike our uses and our destinies.
Our ministering two angels look sur-
prise
On one another, as they strike athwart
Their wings in passing. Thou, be-
think thee, art
A guest for queens to social pageant-
ries,
With gages from a hundred brighter
eyes
Than tears even can make mine, to
ply thy part
Of chief musician. What hast *thou*
to do
With looking from the lattice-lights
at me,
A poor, tired, wandering singer?
. . . singing through
The dark, and leaning up a cypress
tree?
The chrism is on thine head,—on
mine, the dew,—
And Death must dig the level where
these agree.

IV

Thou hast thy calling to some palace
floor,
Most gracious singer of high poems!
where
The dancers will break footing from
the care
Of watching up thy pregnant lips for
more.
And dost thou lift this house's latch,
too poor
For hand of thine? and canst thou
think and bear
To let thy music drop here unaware
In folds of golden fulness at my door?
Look up and see the casement broken
in,
The bats and owlets builders in the
roof!
My cricket chirps against thy mando-
lin.

Hush ! call no echo up in further
proof
Of desolation ! there's a voice within
That weeps . . . as thou must sing
. . . alone, aloof.

V

I lift my heavy heart up solemnly,
As once Electra her sepulchral urn,
And, looking in thine eyes, I over-
turn
The ashes at thy feet. Behold and see
What a great heap of grief lay hid in
me,
And how the red wild sparkles dimly
burn
Through the ashen greyness. If thy
foot in scorn
Could tread them out to darkness
utterly,
It might be well perhaps. But if
instead
Thou wait beside me for the wind to
blow
The grey dust up, . . . those laurels
on thine head,
O my beloved, will not shield thee so,
That none of all the fires shall scorch
and shred
The hair beneath. Stand farther off,
then ! Go.

VI

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall
stand
Henceforward in thy shadow.
Nevermore
Alone upon the threshold of my door
Of individual life, I shall command
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand
Serenely in the sunshine as before,
Without the sense of that which I
forebore, . . .
Thy touch upon the palm. The
widest land
Doom takes to part us, leaves thy
heart in mine
With pulses that beat double. What
I do
And what I dream include thee, as the
wine
Must taste of its own grapes. And
when I sue
God for myself, He hears that name
of thine,
And sees within my eyes, the tears of
two.

VII

The face of all the world is changed,
I think,
Since first I heard the footsteps of
thy soul
Move still, oh, still, beside me, as
they stole
Betwixt me and the dreadful outer
brink
Of obvious death, where I who
thought to sink
Was caught up into love and taught
the whole
Of life in a new rhythm. The cup
of dole
God gave for baptism, I am fain to
drink,
And praise its sweetness, sweet,
with thee anear.
The names of country, heaven, are
changed away
For where thou art or shalt be, there
or here ;
And this . . . this lute and song . . .
loved yesterday,
(The singing angels know) are only
dear,
Because thy name moves right in
what they say.

VIII

What can I give thee back, O liberal
And princely giver, . . . who hast
brought the gold
And purple of thine heart, unstained,
untold,
And laid them on the outside of the
wall
For such as I to take, or leave withal,
In unexpected largesse ? Am I cold,
Ungrateful, that for these most mani-
fold
High gifts, I render nothing back at
all ?
Not so. Not cold !—but very poor
instead !
Ask God who knows ! for frequent
tears have run
The colours from my life, and left so
dead
And pale a stuff, it were not fitly
done
To give the same as pillow to thy
head.
Go farther ! Let it serve to trample
on.

IX

Can it be right to give what I can
 give?
 To let thee sit beneath the fall of
 tears
 As salt as mine, and hear the sighing
 years
 Re-sighing on my lips renunciative
 Through those infrequent smiles
 which fail to live
 For all thy adjurations? O my
 fears,
 That this can scarce be right! We
 are not peers,
 So to be lovers; and I own and
 grieve
 That givers of such gifts as mine are,
 must
 Be counted with the ungenerous.
 Out, alas!
 I will not soil thy purple with my
 dust,
 Nor breathe my poison on thy
 Venice-glass,
 Nor give thee any love . . . which
 were unjust.
 Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass.

x

Yet, love, mere love, is beautiful
 indeed
 And worthy of acceptation. Fire is
 bright,
 Let temple burn, or flax! An equal
 light
 Leaps in the flame from cedar-plank
 or weed.
 And love is fire: and when I say at
 need
*I love thee . . . mark! . . . I love
 thee! . . . in thy sight*
 I stand transfigured, glorified aright,
 With conscience of the new rays that
 proceed
 Out of my face toward thine. There's
 nothing low
 In love, when love the lowest:
 meanest creatures
 Who love God, God accepts while
 loving so.
 And what I *feel*, across the inferior
 features
 Of what I *am*, doth flash itself, and
 show
 How that great work of Love en-
 hances Nature's.

XI

And therefore if to love can be desert,
 I am not all unworthy. Cheeks as
 pale
 As these you see, and trembling knees
 that fail
 To bear the burden of a heavy heart,—
 This weary minstrel-life that once
 was girt
 To climb Aornus, and can scarce avail
 To pipe now 'gainst the woodland
 nightingale
 A melancholy music! . . . why ad-
 vert
 To these things? O Beloved, it is
 plain
 I am not of thy worth nor for thy
 place:
 And yet because I love thee I obtain
 From that same love this vindicating
 grace,
 To live on still in love and yet in
 vain, . . .
 To bless thee yet renounce thee to thy
 face.

XII

Indeed, this very love which is my
 boast,
 And which, when rising up from
 breast to brow,
 Doth crown me with a ruby large
 enow
 To draw men's eyes and prove the
 inner cost, . . .
 This love even, all my worth, to the
 uttermost,
 I should not love withal, unless that
 thou
 Hadst set me an example, shown me
 how,
 When first thine earnest eyes with
 mine were crossed,
 And love called love. And thus, I
 cannot speak
 Of love even, as a good thing of my
 own.
 Thy soul hath snatched up mine all
 faint and weak,
 And placed it by thee on a golden
 throne,—
 And that I love (O soul, I must be
 meek!)

Is by thee only, whom I love alone.

XIII

And wilt thou have me fashion into
 speech

The love I bear thee, finding words
 enough,
 And hold the torch out, while the
 winds are rough,
 Between our faces, to cast light on
 each?—
 I dropt it at thy feet. I cannot teach
 My hand to hold my spirit so far off
 From myself . . . me . . . that I
 should bring thee proof
 In words, of love hid in me out of
 reach.
 Nay, let the silence of my womanhood
 Commend my woman-love to thy
 belief,—
 Seeing that I stand unwon, however
 wooed,
 And rend the garment of my life,
 in brief,
 By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,
 Lest one touch of this heart convey
 its grief.

XIV

If thou must love me, let it be for
 nought
 Except for love's sake only. Do not
 say,
 "I love her for her smile . . . her
 look . . . her way
 Of speaking gently, . . . for a trick of
 thought
 That falls in well with mine, and,
 certes, brought
 A sense of pleasant ease on such a
 day"—
 For these things in themselves, Be-
 loved, may
 Be changed, or change for thee,—
 and love so wrought,
 May be unwrought so. Neither love
 me for
 Thine own dear pity's wiping my
 cheeks dry,—
 Since one might well forget to weep
 who bore
 Thy comfort long, and lose thy love
 thereby.
 But love me for love's sake, that
 evermore
 Thou may'st love on through love's
 eternity.

XV

Accuse me not, beseech thee, that I
 wear

Too calm and sad a face in front of
 thine;
 For we two look two ways, and
 cannot shine
 With the same sunlight on our brow
 and hair.
 On me thou lookest, with no doubting
 care,
 As on a bee shut in a crystalline,—
 For sorrow hath shut me safe in
 love's divine,
 And to spread wing and fly in the
 outer air
 Were most impossible failure, if I
 strove
 To fail so: But I look on thee . . .
 on thee . . .
 Beholding, besides love, the end of
 love,
 Hearing oblivion beyond memory . . .
 As one who sits and gazes from above,
 Over the rivers to the bitter sea.

XVI

And yet, because thou overcomest so,
 Because thou art more noble and
 like a king,
 Thou canst prevail against my fears
 and fling
 Thy purple round me, till my heart
 shall grow
 Too close against thine heart, hence
 forth to know
 How it shook when alone. Why,
 conquering
 May prove as lordly and complete a
 thing
 In lifting upward as in crushing low:
 And, as a soldier struck down by a
 sword
 May cry, "My strife ends here," and
 sink to earth,
 Even so, Beloved, I at last record,
 Here ends my doubt! If *thou* invite
 me forth,
 I rise above abasement at the word
 Make thy love larger to enlarge my
 worth.

XVII

My poet, thou canst touch on all the
 notes
 God set between His After and Before,
 And strike up and strike off the
 general roar
 Of the rushing worlds, a melody that
 floats

In a serene air purely. Antidotes
Of medicated music, answering for
Mankind's forlornest uses, thou canst
pour

From thence into their ears. God's
will devotes

Thine to such ends, and mine to wait
on thine!

How, Dearest, wilt thou have me for
most use?

A hope, to sing by gladly? . . . or a
fine

Sad memory, With thy songs to inter-
fuse? . . .

A shade, in which to sing . . . of
palm or pine?

A grave, on which to rest from singing?
. . . Choose.

XVIII

I never gave a lock of hair away
To a man, Dearest, except this to
thee,

Which now upon my fingers thought-
fully

I ring out to the full brown length,
and say,

"Take it." My day of youth went
yesterday;

My hair no longer bounds to my foot's
glee,

Nor plant I it from rose or myrtle-
tree,

As girls do, any more. It only may
Now shade on two pale cheeks, the
mark of tears,

Taught drooping from the head that
hangs aside

Through sorrow's trick. I thought
the funeral shears

Would take this first, but Love is
justified;

Take it thou, . . . finding pure,
from all those years,

The kiss my mother left here when
she died.

XIX

The soul's Rialto hath its merchand-
ise;

I barter curl for curl upon that mart;
And from my poet's forehead to my
heart,

Receive this lock which outweighs
argosies,—

As purple black, as erst to Pindar's
eyes

The dim purpureal tresses gloomed
athwart

The nine white Muse-brows. For
this counterpart, . . .

Thy bay-crown's shade, Beloved, I
surmise,

Still lingers on thy curl, it is so black!
Thus, with a fillet of smooth-kissing

breath,
I tie the shadow safe from gliding

back,
And lay the gift where nothing hin-
dereth,

Here on my heart as on thy brow,
to lack

No natural heat till mine grows cold
in death.

XX

Beloved, my Beloved, when I think
That thou wast in the world a year
ago,

What time I sate alone here in the
snow

And saw no footprint, heard the
silence sink

No moment at thy voice, . . . but
link by link

When counting all my chains as if
that so

They never could fall off at any blow
Struck by thy possible hand . . .

why, thus I drink
Of life's great cup of wonder. Won-
derful,

Never to feel thee thrill the day or
night

With personal act or speech,—nor
ever cull

Some prescience of thee with the
blossoms white

Thou sawest growing! Atheists are
as dull,

Who cannot guess God's presence out
of sight.

XXI

Say over again and yet once over
again

That thou dost love me. Though the
word repeated

Should seem "a cuckoo-song," as
thou dost treat it,

Remember never to the hill or plain,
Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-
strain,

Comes the fresh Spring in all her
green completed !
Beloved, I, amid the darkness greeted
By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that
doubt's pain
Cry . . . speak once more . . . thou
lovest ! Who can fear
Too many stars, though each in
heaven shall roll—
Too many flowers, though each shall
crown the year ?
Say thou dost love me, love me, love
me—toll
The silver iterance !—only minding,
Dear,
To love me also in silence, with thy
soul.

XXII

When our two souls stand up erect
and strong,
Face to face, silent, drawing nigh
and nigher,
Until the lengthening wings break
into fire
At either curv'd point,—what bitter
wrong
Can the earth do to us, that we
should not long
Be here contented ? Think. In
mounting higher,
The angels would press on us, and
aspire
To drop some golden orb of perfect
song
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us
stay
Rather on earth, Beloved,—where
the unfit
Contrarious moods of men recoil
away
And isolate pure spirits, and permit
A place to stand and love in for a day,
With darkness and the death-hour
rounding it.

XXIII

Is it indeed so ? If I lay here dead,
Wouldst thou miss any life in losing
mine,
And would the sun for thee more
coldly shine,
Because of grave-damps falling round
my head ?
I marvelled, my Beloved, when I
read
Thy thought so in the letter. I am
thine—

But . . . so much to thee ? Can I
pour thy wine
While my hands tremble ? Then my
soul, instead
Of dreams of death, resumes life's
lower range !
Then, love me, Love ! look on me . . .
breathe on me !
As brighter ladies do not count it
strange,
For love, to give up acres and degree,
I yield the grave for thy sake, and
exchange
My near sweet view of Heaven, for
earth with thee !

XXIV

Let the world's sharpness like a
clasping knife
Shut in upon itself and do no harm
In this close hand of Love, now soft
and warm,
And let us hear no sound of human
strife
After the click of the shutting.
Life to life—
I lean upon thee, Dear, without
alarm,
And feel as safe as guarded by a
charm,
Against the stab of worldlings who
if rife,
Are weak to injure. Very whitely
still
The lilies of our lives may reassure
Their blossoms from their roots !
accessible
Alone to heavenly dewdrops that drop not
fewer ;
Growing straight, out of man's reach,
on the hill.
God only, Who made us rich, can
make us poor.

XXV

A heavy heart, Beloved, have I borne
From year to year until I saw thy
face,
And sorrow after sorrow took the
place
Of all those natural joys as lightly
worn
As the stringed pearls . . . each
lifted in its turn
By a beating heart at dance-time.
Hopes apace
Were changed to long despairs, . . .
till God's own grace

Could scarcely lift above the world
 forlorn
 My heavy heart. Then *thou* didst
 bid me bring
 And let it drop adown thy calmly
 great
 Deep being! Fast it sinketh, as a
 thing
 Which its own nature doth precipi-
 tate,
 While time doth close above it, medi-
 ating
 Betwixt the stars and the unaccom-
 plished fate.

XXVI

I lived with visions for my company
 Instead of men and women, years ago,
 And found them gentle mates, nor
 thought to know
 A sweeter music than they played to
 me.
 But soon their trailing purple was not
 free
 Of this world's dust,—their lutes did
 silent grow,
 And I myself grew faint and blind
 below
 Their vanishing eyes. Then *THOU*
 didst come . . . to *be*,
 Beloved, what they *seemed*. Their
 shining fronts,
 Their songs, their splendours . . .
 (better, yet the same, . . .
 As river-water hallowed into fonts . . .)
 Met in thee, and from out thee over-
 came
 My soul with satisfaction of all
 wants—
 Because God's gifts put man's best
 dreams to shame.

XXVII

My own Belovèd, who hast lifted me
 From this drear flat of earth where I
 was thrown,
 And in betwixt the languid ringlets,
 blown
 A life-breath, till the forehead hope-
 fully
 Shines out again, as all the angels see,
 Before thy saving kiss! My own,
 my own,
 Who camest to me when the world
 was gone,
 And I who looked for only God, found
thee!

I find thee: I am safe, and strong,
 and glad.
 As one who stands in dewless aspho-
 del
 Looks backward on the tedious time
 he had
 In the upper life . . . so I, with
 bosom-swell,
 Make witness, here between the good
 and bad,
 That Love, as strong as Death, re-
 trieves as well.

XXVIII

My letters! all dead paper, . . .
 mute and white!—
 And yet they seem alive and quivering
 Against my tremulous hands which
 loose the string
 And let them drop down on my knee
 to-night.
 This said . . . he wished to have
 me in his sight
 Once, as a friend: this fixed a day
 in spring
 To come and touch my hand . . . a
 simple thing,
 Yet I wept for it!—this . . . the
 paper's light . . .
 Said, *Dear, I love thee*: and I sank
 and quailed
 As if God's future thundered on my
 past:
 This said, *I am thine*—and so its
 ink has paled
 With lying at my heart that beat too
 fast:
 And this . . . O Love, thy words
 have ill availed,
 If, what this said, I dared repeat at
 last!

XXIX

I think of thee!—my thoughts do
 twine and bud
 About thee, as wild vines about a
 tree
 Put out broad leaves, and soon there's
 nought to see
 Except the straggling green which
 hides the wood.
 Yet, O my palm-tree, be it under-
 stood
 I will not have my thoughts instead
 of thee
 Who art dearer, better! Rather
 instantly

Renew thy presence ! As a strong
tree should,
Rustle thy boughs and set thy
trunk all bare,
And let these bands of greenery
which inspire thee,
Drop heavily down, . . . burst, shat-
tered, everywhere !
Because, in this deep joy to see and
hear thee,
And breathe within thy shadow a new
air,
I do not think of thee—I am too near
thee.

XXX

I see thine image through my tears
to-night,
And yet to-day I saw thee smiling.
How
Refer the cause ?—Beloved, is it thou
Or I ? Who makes me sad ? The
acolyte
Amid the chanted joy and thankful
rite,
May so fall flat, with pale insensate
brow,
On the altar-stair. I hear thy voice
and vow
Perplexed, uncertain, since thou'rt
out of sight,
As he, in his swooning ears, the
choir's Amen !
Beloved, dost thou love ? or did I
see all
The glory as I dreamed, and fainted
when
Too vehement light dilated my ideal
For my soul's eyes ? Will that light
come again,
As now these tears come . . . falling
hot and real ?

XXXI

Thou comest ! all is said without a
word.
I sit beneath thy looks, as children do
In the noon-sun, with souls that
tremble through
Their happy eyelids from an una-
verred
Yet prodigal inward joy. Behold, I
erred
In that last doubt ! and yet I cannot
rue
The sin most, but the occasion . . .
that we two

Should for a moment stand unmin-
istered
By a mutual presence. Ah, keep near
and close,
Thou dovelike help ! and, when my
fears would rise,
With thy broad heart serenely inter-
pose !
Brood down with thy divine suffi-
ciencies
These thoughts which tremble when
bereft of those,
Like callow birds left desert to the
skies.

XXXII

The first time that the sun rose on
thine oath
To love me, I looked forward to the
moon
To slacken all those bonds which
seemed too soon
And quickly tied to make a lasting
troth.
Quick-loving hearts, I thought, may
quickly loathe ;
And, looking on myself, I seemed not
one
For such man's love !—more like
an out of tune
Worn viol, a good singer would be
wroth
To spoil his song with, and which,
snatched in haste,
Is laid down at the first ill-sounding
note.
I did not wrong myself so, but I
placed
A wrong on thee. For perfect
strains may float
'Neath master-hands, from instru-
ments defaced,—
And great souls, at one stroke, may
do and dote.

XXXIII

Yes, call me by my pet-name ! let me
hear
The name I used to run at, when a
child,
From innocent play, and leave the
cowslips piled,
To glance up in some face that proved
me dear
With the look of its eyes. I miss the
clear
Fond voices, which, being drawn and
reconciled

Into the music of Heaven's undefiled,
 Call me no longer. Silence on the
 bier,
 While I call God . . . call God!—
 So let thy mouth
 Be heir to those who are now exani-
 mate:
 Gather the north flowers to complete
 the south,
 And catch the early love up in the
 late!
 Yes, call me by that name,—and I, in
 truth,
 With the same heart, will answer, and
 not wait.

xxxiv

With the same heart, I said, I'll an-
 swer thee
 As those, when thou shalt call me by
 my name—
 Lo, the vain promise! Is the same,
 the same,
 Perplexed and ruffled by life's
 strategy?
 When called before, I told how hastily
 I dropped my flowers, or brake off
 from a game,
 To run and answer with a smile that
 came
 At play last moment and went on with
 me
 Through my obedience. When I
 answer now,
 I drop a grave thought,—break
 from solitude—
 Yet still my heart goes to thee . . .
 ponder how . . .
 Not as to a single good but all my
 good!
 Lay thy hand on it, best one, and
 allow
 That no child's foot could run fast
 as this blood.

xxxv

If I leave all for thee, wilt thou
 exchange
 And be all to me? Shall I never
 miss
 Home-talk and blessing and the
 common kiss
 That comes to each in turn, nor
 count it strange,
 When I look up, to drop on a new
 range
 Of walls and floors . . . another
 home than this?

B.P.

Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me
 which is
 Filled by dead eyes too tender to
 know change?
 That's hardest! If to conquer love
 has tried,
 To conquer grief tries more . . . as
 all things prove;
 For grief indeed is love and grief
 beside.
 Alas! I have grieved so I am hard to
 love—
 Yet love me—wilt thou? Open
 thine heart wide,
 And fold within the wet wings of
 thy dove.

xxxvi

When we met first and loved, I did
 not build
 Upon the event with marble. Could it
 mean
 To last, a love set pendulous between
 Sorrow and sorrow? Nay, I rather
 thrilled,
 Distrusting every light that seemed
 to gild
 The onward path, and feared to
 overlean
 A finger even. And, though I have
 grown serene
 And strong since then, I think that
 God has willed
 A still renewable fear . . . O love,
 O troth . . .
 Lest these enclasped hands should
 never hold,
 This mutual kiss drop down between
 us both
 As an unowned thing, once the lips
 being cold.
 And Love be false! if he, to keep one
 oath,
 Must lose one joy by his life's star
 foretold.

xxxvii

Pardon, oh, pardon, that my soul
 should make
 Of all that strong divineness which I
 know
 For thine and thee, an image only so
 Formed of the sand, and fit to shift
 and break.
 It is that distant years which did not
 take
 Thy sovrantry, recoiling with a blow,

X

Have forced my swimming brain to
undergo
Their doubt and dread, and blindly
to forsake
Thy purity of likeness, and distort
Thy worthiest love with worthless
counterfeit.
As if a shipwrecked Pagan, safe in
port,
His guardian sea-god to commemorate,
Should set a sculptured porpoise, gills,
a-snort,
And vibrant tail, within the temple-
gate.

xxxviii

First time he kissed me, he but only
kissed
The fingers of this hand wherewith I
write,
And ever since it grew more clean
and white, . . .
Slow to world-greetings . . . quick
with its "Oh, list,"
When the angels speak. A ring of
amethyst
I could not wear here plainer to my
sight,
Than that first kiss. The second
passed in height
The first, and sought the forehead,
and half missed,
Half falling on the hair. O beyond
need!
That was the chrism of love, which
love's own crown,
With sanctifying sweetness, did pre-
cede.
The third upon my lips was folded
down
In perfect, purple state! since when,
indeed,
I have been proud and said, "My
Love, my own."

xxxix

Because thou hast the power and
own'st the grace
To look through and behind this mask
of me,
(Against which, years have beat thus
blanchingly
With their rains!) and behold my
soul's true face,
The dim and weary witness of life's
race,—
Because thou hast the faith and love
to see,

Through that same soul's distracting
lethargy,
The patient angel waiting for his
place
In the new Heavens,—because nor
sin nor woe,
Nor God's infliction, nor death's
neighbourhood,
Nor all which others viewing, turn
to go, . . .
Nor all which makes me tired of all,
self-viewed, . . .
Nothing repels thee, . . . Dearest,
teach me so
To pour out gratitude, as thou dost,
good!

xl

Oh yes! they love through all this
world of ours!
I will not gainsay love, called love
forsooth.
I have heard love talked in my early
youth,
And since, not so long back but that
the flowers
Then gathered, smell still. Mussul-
mans and Giaours
Throw kerchiefs at a smile, and have
no ruth
For any weeping. Polypheme's white
tooth
Slips on the nut, if after frequent
showers
The shell is over-smooth,—and not so
much
Will turn the thing called love, aside
to hate,
Or else to oblivion. But thou art not
such
A lover, my Beloved! thou canst wait
Through sorrow and sickness, to
bring souls to touch,
And think it soon when others cry,
"Too late."

xli

I thank all who have loved me in
their hearts,
With thanks and love from mine.
Deep thanks to all
Who paused a little near the prison-
wall,
To hear my music in its louder parts,
Ere they went onward, each one to
the mart's
Or temple's occupation, beyond call.

But thou, who in my voice's sink and
fall,
When the sob took it, thy divinest
Art's
Own instrument didst drop down at
thy foot,
To hearken what I said between my
tears, . . .
Instruct me how to thank thee!—
Oh, to shoot
My soul's full meaning into future
years,
That *they* should lend it utterance,
and salute
Love that endures, with Life that
disappears!

XLII

How do I love thee? Let me count
the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth
and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out
of sight
For the ends of Being and Ideal
Grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-
light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for
Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from
Praise;
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my child-
hood's faith;
I love thee with a love I seemed to
lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee
with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if
' God choose,
I shall but love thee better after
death.

XLIII

Beloved, thou hast brought me
many flowers
Plucked in the garden, all the summer
through
And winter, and it seemed as if they
grew
In this close room nor missed the
sun and showers.
So, in the like name of that love of
ours,
Take back these thoughts which
here unfolded too,

And which on warm and cold days
I withdrew
From my heart's ground. Indeed,
those beds and bowers
Be overgrown with bitter weeds and
rue,
And wait thy weeding; yet here's
eglantine,
Here's ivy!—take them, as I used to do
Thy flowers, and keep them where
they shall not pine;
Instruct thine eyes to keep their
colours true,
And tell thy soul, their roots are left
in mine.

CASA GUIDI WINDOWS

(1851)

THIS Poem contains the impressions of
the writer upon events in Tuscany of
which she was a witness. "From a
window," the critic may demur. She
bows to the objection in the very title of
her work. No continuous narrative, nor
exposition of political philosophy, is
attempted by her. It is a simple story of
personal impressions, whose only value is
in the intensity with which they were
received, as proving her warm affection
for a beautiful and unfortunate country;
and the sincerity with which they are
related, as indicating her own good faith
and freedom from all partisanship.

Of the two parts of this Poem, the
first was written nearly three years ago,
while the second resumes the actual
situation of 1851. The discrepancy
between the two parts is a sufficient
guarantee to the public of the truthful-
ness of the writer, who, though she
certainly escaped the epidemic "falling
sickness" of enthusiasm for Pio Nono,
takes shame upon herself that she be-
lieved, like a woman, some royal oaths,
and lost sight of the probable conse-
quences of some obvious popular defects.
If the discrepancy should be painful to
the reader, let him understand that to
the writer it has been more so. But
such discrepancy we are called upon to
accept at every hour by the conditions
of our nature . . . the discrepancy
between aspiration and performance,
between faith and disillusion, between
hope and fact.

"O trusted, broken prophecy,
O richest fortune sourly crost,

Born for the future, to the future lost!"
Nay, not lost to the future in this case.
The future of Italy shall not be disin-
herited.

FLORENCE, 1851.

PART I

I

I HEARD last night a little child go
singing
'Neath Casa Guidi windows, by the
church,
" *O bella libertà, O bella !*" stringing
The same words still on notes he
went in search
So high for, you concluded the up-
springing
Of such a nimble bird to sky from
perch
Must leave the whole bush in a
tremble green ;
And that the heart of Italy must
beat,
While such a voice had leave to rise
serene
'Twixt church and palace of a
Florence street !—
A little child, too, who not long had
been
By mother's finger steadied on his
feet ;
And still "*O bella libertà*" he sang.

II

Then I thought, musing, of the in-
numeros
Sweet songs which for this Italy
outrang
From older singers' lips, who sang not
thus
Exultingly and purely, yet, with
pang
Sheathed into music, touched the
heart of us
So finely that the pity scarcely
pained !
I thought how Filicaja led on others,
Bewailers for their Italy enchained,
And how they called her childless
among mothers,
Widow of empires, ay, and scarce
refrained
Cursing her beauty to her face, as
brothers
Might a shamed sister,—“ Had she
been less fair
She were less wretched,”—how, evok-
ing so
From congregated wrong and
heaped despair
Of men and women writhing under
blow,

Harrowed and hideous in their
filthy lair,
A personating Image, wherein woe
Was wrapt in beauty from offend-
ing much,
They called it Cybele, or Niobe,
Or laid it corpse-like on a bier for
such,
Where the whole world might drop
for Italy
Those cadenced tears which burn
not where they touch,—
“ Juliet of nations, canst thou die as
we ?
And was the violet crown that
crowned thy head
So over large, though new buds made
it rough,
It slipped down and across thine
eyelids dead,
O sweet, fair Juliet ?”—Of such songs
enough ;
Too many of such complaints ! Be-
hold, instead,
Void at Verona, Juliet's marble
trough !
And void as that is, are all images
Men set between themselves and
actual wrong,
To catch the weight of pity, meet
the stress
Of conscience ; though 'tis easier to
gaze long
On personations, masks, and effi-
gies,
Than to see live weak creatures
crushed by strong.

III

For me who stand in Italy to-day,
Where worthier poets stood and sang
before,
I kiss their footsteps, yet their
words gainsay :
I can but muse in hope upon this
shore
Of golden Arno, as it shoots away
Straight through the heart of Flor-
ence, 'neath the four
Bent bridges, seeming to strain off
like bows,
And tremble, while the arrowy under-
tide
Shoots on and cleaves the marble
as it goes,
And strikes up palace-walls on either
side,

And froths the cornice out in glittering rows,
 With doors and windows quaintly multiplied,
 And terrace-sweeps, and gazers upon all,
 By whom if flower or kerchief were thrown out,
 From any lattice there, the same would fall
 Into the river underneath, no doubt,—
 It runs so close and fast 'twixt wall and wall.
 How beautiful ! The mountains from without
 Listen in silence for the word said next,
 (What word will men say ?) here where Giotto planted
 His campanile, like an unperplexed
 Question to Heaven, concerning the things granted
 To a great people, who, being greatly vexed
 In act, in aspiration keep undaunted !
 (What word says God ?) The sculptor's "Night" and "Day,"
 And "Dawn" and "Twilight," wait in marble scorn,
 Like dogs couched on a dunghill, on the clay
 From whence the Medicean stamp's outworn,—
 The final putting off of all such sway
 By all such hands, and freeing of the unborn
 In Florence, and the world outside his Florence.
 That's Michel Angelo ! his statues wait
 In the small chapel of the dim St. Lawrence !
 "Day's" eyes are breaking bold and passionate
 Over his shoulder, and will flash abhorrence
 On darkness, and with level looks meet fate,
 When once loose from that marble film of theirs :
 The "Night" has wild dreams in her sleep ; the "Dawn"
 Is haggard as the sleepless : "Twilight" wears
 A sort of horror : as the veil withdrawn

'Twixt the artist's soul and works had left them heirs
 Of the deep thoughts which would not quail nor fawn,
 His angers and contempts, his hope and love ;
 For without a meaning did he place
 Princely Urbino on the seat above
 With everlasting shadow on his face ;
 While the slow dawns and twilights disapprove
 The ashes of his long-extinguished race,
 Which never shall clog more the feet of men.

IV

I do believe, divinest Angelo,
 That winter-hour, in Via Larga, when
 Thou wert commanded to build up in snow
 Some marvel of thine art, which straight again
 Dissolved beneath the sun's Italian glow,
 While thine eyes, still broad with the plastic passion,
 Thawed, too, in drops of wounded manhood, . . since,
 Mocking alike thine art and indignation,
 Laughed at the palace-window the new prince, . .
 "Aha ! this genius needs for exaltation,
 When all's said, and howe'er the proud may vince,
 A little marble from our princely mines !"
 I do believe that hour thou laughedst too,
 For the whole world and for thy Florentines,
 After those few tears—which were only few !
 That as, beneath the sun, the grand white lines
 Of thy snow-statue trembled and withdrew,—
 The head, erect as Jove's, being palsied first,
 The eyelids flattened, the full brow turned blank,—
 When the right hand, upraised as if it cursed,

Dropped, a mere snowball, and the
people sank

Their voices, though a louder
laughter burst

From the window,—Michel, then, thy
soul could thank

God and the prince, for promise
and presage,

And laugh the laugh back, I think,
verily,

Thine eyes being purged by tears
of righteous rage,

To read a wrong into a prophecy,
And measure a true great man's
heritage

Against a mere Grand-duke's pos-
terity.

I think thy soul said then, "I do
not need

A principedom and its quarries, after all;
For if I write, paint, carve a word,
indeed,

On book or board or dust, on floor or
wall,

The same is kept of God Who tak-
eth heed

That not a letter of the meaning fall,
Or ere it touch and teach His world's
deep heart,

Outlasting, therefore, all your lord-
ships, Sir!

So keep your stone, beseech you,
for your part,

To cover up your grave-place and
refer

The proper titles! *I live by my art!*
The thought I threw into this snow
shall stir

This gazing people when their gaze
is done;

And the tradition of your act and
mine,

When all the snow is melted in the
sun,

Shall gather up, for unborn men, a
sign

Of what is the true principedom! ay,
and none

Shall laugh that day, except the
drunk with wine.

v

Amen, great Angelo! the day is
come;

And, if we laugh not on it, shall we
weep?

Much more we shall not. Through
the mournful hum

Of poets sonnetteering in their sleep
Neath the pale olives, which

droop, tickling some
On chin and forehead from a dream
too deep,—

Through all that drowsy hum of
voices smooth,

The hopeful bird mounts carolling
from brake;

The hopeful child, with leaps to
catch his growth,

Sings open-eyed for liberty's sweet
sake;

And I, who am a singer too, for-
sooth,

Prefer to sing with these who are
awake,

With birds, with babes, with men
who will not fear

The baptism of the holy morning
dew,

(And many of such wakers now are
here,

Complete in their anointed manhood,
who

Will greatly dare and greatlier per-
severe!)

Than join those old thin voices with
my new,

And sigh for Italy with some safe
sigh

Cooped up in music 'twixt an "oh"
and "ah"—

Nay, hand in hand with that young
child, will I

Rather go singing "*Bella libertà*,"
Than, with those poets, croon the
dead or cry

"*Se tu men bella fossi, Italia!*"

vi

"Less wretched if less fair," per-
haps a truth

Is so far plain in this—that Italy,
Long trammelled with the purple
of her youth

Against her age's due activity,
Sate still upon her graves, without
the ruth

Of death, but also without energy
And hope of life. "What's Italy?"
men ask:

And others answer, "Virgil, Cicero,
Catullus, Cæsar." And what more?
to task

The memory closer—"Why, Boccaccio,

Dante, Petrarca,"—and if still the flask

Appears to yield its wine by drops too slow,—

"Angelo, Raffael, Pergolese,"—all Whose strong hearts beat through stone, or charged, again, Cloth-threads with fire of souls electrical,

Or broke up heaven for music. What more then?

Why, then, no more. The chapel's last beads fall

In naming the last saintship within ken,

And, after that, none prayeth in the land.

Alas, this Italy has too long swept Heroic ashes up for hour-glass sand; Of her own past, impassioned nympholept!

Consenting to be nailed by the hand

To the same bay-tree under which she stepped

A queen of old, and plucked a leafy branch;

And licensing the world too long, indeed,

To use her broad phylacteries to staunch

And stop her bloody lips, which took no heed

How one quick breath would draw an avalanche

Of living sons around her, to succeed, The vanished generations. Could she count

Those oil-eaters, with large, live, mobile mouths

Agape for macaroni, in the amount Of consecrated heroes of her south's Bright rosary? The pitcher at the fount,

The gift of gods, being broken,—why, one loathes

To let the ground-leaves of the place confer

A natural bowl. And thus, she chose to seem

No nation, but the poet's pensioner,

With alms from every land of song and dream;

While her own pipers sweetly piped of her,

Until their proper breaths, in that extreme

Of sighing, split the reed on which they played!

Of which, no more: but never say "no more"

To Italy! Her memories undis-mayed

Say rather "evermore"—her graves implore

Her future to be strong and not afraid—

Her very statues send their looks before!

VII

We do not serve the dead—the past is past!

God lives, and lifts His glorious mornings up

Before the eyes of men, who wake at last,

And put away the meats they used to sup,

And on the dry dust of the ground outcast

The dregs remaining of the ancient cup,

And turn to wakeful prayer and worthy act.

The dead, upon their awful 'vantage ground,—

The sun not in their faces,—shall abstract

No more our strength: we will not be discrowned

Through treasuring their crowns, nor deign transact

A barter of the present, in a sound, For what was counted good in fore-gone days.

O Dead, ye shall no longer cling to us With your stiff hands of desiccating praise,

And hold us backward by the garment thus,

To stay and laud you in long vire-lays!

Still, no! we will not be oblivious Of our own lives, because ye lived before,

Nor of our acts, because ye acted well,—

We thank you that ye first un-latched the door—

We will not make it inaccessible
 By thankings in the doorway any
 more,
 But we'll go onward to extinguish hell
 With our fresh souls, our younger
 hope, and God's
 Maturity of purpose. Soon shall we
 Be the dead too! and, that our
 periods
 Of life may round themselves to
 memory,
 As smoothly as on our graves the
 funeral-sods
 We must look to it to excel as ye,
 And bear our age as far, unlimited
 By the last sea-mark! so, to be in-
 voked
 By future generations, as the Dead.

VIII

'Tis true that when the dust of death
 has choked
 A great man's voice, the common
 words he said
 Turn oracles,—the meanings which
 he yoked
 Like horses, draw like griffins!—
 this is true
 And acceptable. Also I desire,
 When men make record, with the
 flowers they strew,
 "Savonarola's soul went out in fire
 Upon our Grand-duke's piazza, and
 burned through
 A moment first, or ere he did expire,
 The veil betwixt the right and
 wrong, and showed
 How near God sate and judged the
 judges there,—"
 Desire, upon the pavement over-
 strewn,
 To cast my violets with as reverent
 care,
 And prove that all the winters
 which have snowed
 Cannot snow out the scent, from
 stones and air,
 Of a sincere man's virtues. This
 was he,
 Savonarola, who, while Peter sank
 With his whole boat-load, called
 courageously
 "Wake Christ, wake Christ!"—who,
 having tried the tank
 Of the church-waters used for bap-
 tistry

Ere Luther lived to spill them, said
 they stank!
 Who also, by a princely deathbed,
 cried
 "Loose Florence, or God will not loose
 thy soul,"
 While the Magnificent fell back and
 died
 Beneath the star-looks, shooting
 from the cowl,
 Which turned to wormwood bitter-
 ness the wide
 Deep sea of his ambitions. It were
 foul
 To grudge Savonarola and the rest
 Their violets! rather pay them quick
 and fresh!
 The emphasis of death makes mani-
 fest
 The eloquence of action in our flesh;
 And men who, living, were but
 dimly guessed,
 When once free from their life's
 entangled mesh,
 Show their full length in graves, or
 even indeed
 Exaggerate their stature, in the flat,
 To noble admirations which ex-
 ceed
 Nobly, nor sin in such excess. For
 that
 Is wise and righteous. We, who
 are the seed
 Of buried creatures, if we turned and
 spate
 Upon our antecedents, we were vile.
 Bring violets rather! If these had
 not walked
 Their furlong, could we hope to
 walk our mile?
 Therefore bring violets! Yet if we,
 self-baulked,
 Stand still a-strewing violets all the
 while,
 These had as well not moved, our-
 selves not talked
 Of these. So rise up with a cheer-
 ful smile,
 And, having strewn the violets, reap
 the corn,
 And, having reaped and garnered,
 bring the plough
 And draw new furrows 'neath the
 healthy morn,
 And plant the great Hereafter in
 this Now.

IX

Of old 'twas so. How step by step
 was worn,
 As each man gained on each,
 securely!—how
 Each by his own strength sought his
 own ideal,
 The ultimate Perfection leaning
 bright
 From out the sun and stars, to bless
 the leal
 And earnest search of all for Fair
 and Right,
 Through the dim forms, by earth
 accounted real!
 Because old Jubal blew into delight
 The souls of men, with clear-piped
 melodies,
 What if young Asaph were content
 at most
 To draw from Jubal's grave, with
 listening eyes,
 Traditionary music's floating ghost
 Into the grass-grown silence? were it
 wise?
 Is it not wiser, Jubal's breath being
 lost,
 That Miriam clashed her cymbals to
 surprise
 The sun between her white arms
 flung apart,
 With new, glad, golden sounds? that
 David's strings
 O'erflowed his hand with music
 from his heart?
 So harmony grows full from many
 springs,
 And happy accident turns holy art.

X

Or enter, in your Florence wanderings,
 Santa Maria Novella church. You
 pass
 The left stair, where, at plague-time,
 Macchiavel
 Saw one with set fair face as in a
 glass,
 Dressed out against the fear of death
 and hell,
 Rustling her silks in pauses of the
 mass,
 To keep the thought off how her hus-
 band fell,
 When she left home, stark dead
 across her feet—

The stair leads up to what Orcagna
 gave
 Of Dante's demons; but you, pass-
 ing it,
 Ascend the right stair of the farther
 nave,
 To muse in a small chapel scarcely
 lit
 By Cimabue's "Virgin". Bright and
 brave,
 That picture was accounted, mark,
 of old!
 A king stood bare before its sovran
 grace;
 A reverent people shouted to be-
 hold
 The picture, not the king; and even
 the place
 Containing such a miracle, grew
 bold,
 Named the Glad Borgo from that
 beauteous face,
 Which thrilled the artist, after
 work, to think
 That his ideal Mary-smile should
 stand
 So very near him!—he, within
 the brink
 Of all that glory, let in by h's hand
 With too divine a rashness! Yet
 none shrink
 Who gaze here now—albeit the thing
 is planned
 Sublimely in the thought's sim-
 plicity.
 The Virgin, throned in empyreal
 state,
 Minds only the young babe upon
 her knee;
 While, each side, angels bear the
 royal weight,
 Prostrated meekly, smiling tenderly
 Oblivion of their wings! the Child
 thereat
 Stretches its hand like God. If
 any should,
 Because of some stiff draperies and
 loose joints,
 Gaze scorn down from the heights
 of Raffaelhood,
 On Cimabue's picture,—Heaven an-
 oints
 The head of no such critic, and his
 blood
 The poet's curse strikes full on, and
 appoints

To ague and cold spasms for ever
 more,
 A noble picture ! worthy of the shout
 Wherewith along the streets the
 people bore
 Its cherub faces, which the sun threw
 out
 Until they stooped and entered the
 church door !—
 Yet rightly was young Giotto talked
 about,
 Whom Cimabue found among the
 sheep,
 And knew, as gods know gods, and
 carried home
 To paint the things he painted,
 with a deep
 And fuller insight, and so overcome
 His chapel-Virgin with a heavenlier
 sweep
 Of light. For thus we mount into
 the sun
 Of great things known or acted. I
 hold, too,
 That Cimabue smiled upon the lad,
 At the first stroke which passed
 what he could do,—
 Or else his Virgin's smile had never
 had
 Such sweetness in't. All great
 men who foreknew
 Their heirs in art, for art's sake have
 been glad,
 And bent their old white heads as
 if uncrowned,
 Fanatics of their pure ideals still,
 Far more than of their laurels
 which were found
 With some less stalwart struggle of
 the will.
 If old Margheritone trembled,
 swooned,
 And died despairing at the open sill
 Of other men's achievements (who
 achieved,
 By loving art beyond the master !) he
 Was old Margheritone and conceiv-
 ed
 Never, at youngest and most ecstasy,
 A Virgin like that dream of one,
 which heaved
 The death-sigh from his heart. If
 wistfully
 Margheritone sickened at the smell
 Of Cimabue's laurel, let him go !—
 Strong Cimabue stood up very well

In spite of Giotto's—and Angelico,
 The artist-saint, kept smiling in his
 cell
 The smile with which he welcomed
 the sweet slow
 Inbreak of angels (whitening
 through the dim
 That he might paint them !) while
 the sudden sense
 Of Raffael's future was revealed to
 him
 By force of his own fair works' com-
 petence.
 The same blue waters where the
 dolphins swim
 Suggest the Tritons. Through the
 blue Immense,
 Strike out all swimmers ! cling not
 in the way
 Of one another, so to sink ; but learn
 The strong man's impulse, catch
 the fresh'ning spray
 He throws up in his motions, and dis-
 cern
 By his clear, westering eye, the
 time of day.
 O God, Thou hast set us worthy gifts
 to earn,
 Beside Thy heaven and Thee ! and
 when I say
 'Tis worth while for the weakest man
 alive
 To live and die,—there's room too,
 I repeat,
 For all the strongest to live well, and
 strive
 Their own way, by their individual
 heat,
 Like a new bee-swarm leaving the old
 hive
 Despite the wax which tempteth
 violet-sweet.
 So let the living live, the dead retain
 Flowers on cold graves !—though
 honour's best supplied,
 When we bring actions, to prove
 theirs not vain,

XI

Cold graves, we say ? it shall be
 testified
 That living men who throb in heart
 and train,
 Without the dead, were colder. If
 we tried

To sink the past beneath our feet, be
 sure
 The future would not stand. Pre-
 cipitate
 This old roof from the shrine—and,
 insecure,
 The nesting swallows fly off, mate
 from mate.
 Scant were the gardens, if the graves
 were fewer!
 And the green poplars grew no
 longer straight,
 Whose tops not looked to Troy. Why,
 who would fight
 For Athens, and not swear by
 Marathon?
 Who would build temples, without
 tombs in sight?
 Who live, without some dead man's
 benison?
 Who seek truth, hope for good, or
 strive for right,
 If, looking up, he saw not in the
 sun
 Some angel of the martyrs, all day
 long
 Standing and waiting! your last
 rhythms will need
 The earliest key-note. Could I sing
 this song,
 If my dead masters had not taken
 heed
 To help the heavens and earth to
 make me strong,
 As the wind ever will find out some
 reed,
 And touch it to such issues as belong
 To such a frail thing? Who denies
 the dead,
 Libations from full cups? Unless we
 choose
 To look back to the hills behind us
 spread,
 The plains before us sadden and con-
 fuse;
 If orphaned, we are disinherited.

XII

I would but turn these lachrymals to
 use,
 Fill them with fresh oil from the
 olive grove,
 To feed the new lamp fuller. Shall I
 say
 What made my heart beat with
 exulting love,
 A few weeks back?

XIII

... The day was such a day
 As Florence owes the sun. The
 sky above,
 Its weight upon the mountains
 seemed to lay,
 And palpitate in glory, like a dove
 Who has flown too fast, full-hearted.
 Take away
 The image! for the heart of man
 beat higher
 That day in Florence, flooding all
 her streets
 And piazzas with a tumult and
 desire.
 The people, with accumulated heats,
 And faces turned one way, as if one
 fire
 Did draw and flush them, leaving their
 old beats,
 Went upward to the palace Pitti
 wall,
 To thank their Grand-duke, who, not
 quite of course,
 Had graciously permitted, at their
 call,
 The citizens to use their civic force
 To guard their civic homes. So,
 one and all,
 The Tuscan cities streamed up to the
 source
 Of this new good, at Florence; tak-
 ing it
 As good so far, presageful of more
 good,—
 The first torch of Italian freedom,
 lit
 To toss in the next tiger's face who
 should
 Approach too near them in a cruel
 fit,—
 The first pulse of an even flow of blood,
 To prove the level of Italian veins
 Toward rights perceived and granted.
 How we gazed
 From Casa Guidi windows, while,
 in trains
 Of orderly procession—banners raised,
 And intermittent bursts of martial
 strains
 Which died upon the shout, as if
 amazed
 By gladness beyond music—they
 passed on!
 The magistrates, with their insignia,
 passed;

And all the people shouted in the
 sun,
 And all the thousand windows which
 had cast
 A ripple of silks, in blue and scarlet,
 down,
 As if the houses overflowed at last,
 Seemed to grow larger with fair
 heads and eyes.
 The lawyers passed; and still arose
 the shout,
 And hands broke from the windows,
 to surprise
 Those grave calm brows with bay-tree
 leaves thrown out.
 The priesthood passed: the friars,
 with worldly-wise
 Keen, sidelong glances from their
 beards, about
 The street, to see who shouted!
 many a monk
 Who takes a long rope in the waist,
 was there!
 Whereat the popular exultation
 drunk
 With indrawn "vivas," the whole
 sunny air,
 While through the murmuring win-
 dows rose and sunk
 A cloud of kerchiefed hands! "the
 church makes fair
 Her welcome in the new Pope's
 name." Ensued
 The black sign of the "martyrs!"
 name no name,
 But count the graves in silence.
 Next, were viewed
 The artists; next, the trades; and
 after came
 The populace, with flag and rights
 as good;
 And very loud the shout was for
 that same
 Motto, "Il popolo," IL POPOLO,—
 The word meant dukedom, empire,
 majesty,
 And kings in such an hour might
 read it so.
 And next, with banners, each in his
 degree,
 Deputed representatives a-row,
 Of every separate state of Tuscany:
 Siena's she-wolf, bristling on the
 fold
 Of the first flag, preceded Pisa's
 hare;

And Massa's lion floated calm in
 gold,
 Pienza's following with his silver stare;
 Arezzo's steed pranced clear from
 bridle-hold,—
 And well might shout our Florence,
 greeting there
 These, and more brethren! Last,
 the world had sent
 The various children of her teeming
 flanks—
 Greeks, English, French—as to
 some parliament
 Of lovers of her Italy, in ranks,
 Each bearing its land's symbols
 reverent;
 At which the stones seemed breaking
 into thanks
 And rattling up to the sky, such
 sounds in proof
 Arose! the very house-walls seemed
 to bend,
 The very windows, up from door
 to roof,
 Flashed out a rapture of bright heads,
 to mend,
 With passionate looks, the gesture's
 whirling off
 A hurricane of leaves! Three hours
 did end
 While all these passed; and ever in
 the crowd,
 Rude men, unconscious of the tears
 that kept
 Their beards moist, shouted; and
 some laughed aloud,
 And none asked any why they
 laughed and wept:
 Friends kissed each other's cheeks,
 and foes long vowed
 Did it more warmly; two-months'
 babies leapt
 Right upward in their mothers'
 arms, whose black,
 Wide, glittering eyes looked else-
 where; lovers pressed
 Each before either, neither glanc-
 ing back;
 And peasant maidens, smoothly 'tired
 and tressed,
 Forgot to finger on their throats
 the slack
 Great pearl-strings; while old blind
 men would not rest,
 But pattered with their staves and
 with their shoes

Still on the stones, and smiled as if
they saw.

O Heaven! I think that day had
noble use

Among God's days. So near stood
Right and Law,

Both mutually forborn! Law
would not bruise,

Nor Right deny; and each in reverent
awe

Honoured the other. What if,
ne'ertheless,

The sun did, that day, leave upon
the vines

No charta, and the liberal Duke's
excess

Did scarce exceed a Guelf's or Ghibel-
line's

In the specific actual righteousness
Of what that day he granted; ¹ still
the signs

Are good, and full of promise, we
must say,

When multitudes thank kings for
granting prayers,

And kings concede their people's
right to pray,

Both in the sunshine! Grievs are not
despairs,

So uttered; nor can royal claims
dismay,

When men, from humble homes and
ducal chairs,

Hate wrong together. It was well
to view

Those banners ruffled in a Grand-
duke's face,

Inscribed, "Live freedom, union,
and all true

Brave patriots who are aided by God's
grace!"

Nor was it ill, when Leopoldo drew
His little children to the window-place

He stood in at the Pitti, to suggest
They, too, should govern as the people

willed.

What a cry rose then! some, who
saw the best,

Swore that his eyes filled up, and over-
filled

With good warm human tears,
which unrepressed

Ran down. I like his face: the fore-
head's build

Has no capacious genius, yet per-
haps

Sufficient comprehension,—mild and
sad,

And careful nobly,—not with care
that wraps

Self-loving hearts, to stifle and make
mad,

But careful with the care that shuns
a lapse

Of faith and duty,—studious not to
add

A burden in the gathering of a gain.
And so, "God save the Duke," I say

with those
Who that day shouted it, and while
dukes reign

May all wear, in the visible overflows
Of spirit, such a look of careful

pain!

Methinks God loves it better than
repose.

XIV

And all the people who went up to let
Their hearts out to that Duke, as
has been told—

Where guess ye that the living people
met,

Kept tryst, formed ranks, chose
leaders, first unrolled

Their banners?

In the Loggia? where is set
Cellini's godlike "Perseus," bronze

—or gold—

(How name the metal, when the statue
flings

Its soul so in your eyes?) with brow
and sword

Superbly calm, as all opposing things
Slain with the Gorgon, were no

more abhorred

Since ended?

No! the people sought no wings
From "Perseus" in the Loggia, nor

implored

An inspiration in the place beside,
From that dim bust of Brutus,

jagged and grand,

Where Buonarrotti passionately tried
Out of the clenched marble to de-
mand

The head of Rome's sublimest homi-
cide,

¹ Since when the constitutional concessions
have been complete in Tuscany, as all the world
knows. The event breaks in upon the medita-
tion, and is too fast for prophecy in these strange
times.—E.B.B.

Then dropt the quivering mallet
 from his hand,
 Despairing he could find no model
 stuff
 Of Brutus, in all Florence, where he
 found
 The gods and gladiators thick
 enough?
 Not there! the people chose still
 holier ground!
 The people, who are simple, blind,
 and rough,
 Know their own angels, after look-
 ing round.
 What chose they then? where met
 they?

xv

On the stone
 Call'd Dante's,—a plain flat stone,
 scarce discerned
 From others in the pavement,—
 whereupon
 He used to bring his quiet chair out,
 turned
 To Brunelleschi's church, and pour
 alone
 The lava of his spirit when it
 burned—
 It is not cold to-day. O passionate
 Poor Dante, who, a banished Flor-
 entine,
 Didst sit austere at banquets of the
 great,
 And muse upon this far-off stone of
 thine,
 And think how oft the passers used to
 wait
 A moment, in the golden day's de-
 cline,
 With "good-night, dearest Dante!"
 —well, good-night!
 I muse now, Dante, and think,
 verily,
 Though chapelled in Ravenna's bye-
 way, might
 Thy buried bones be thrilled to
 ecstasy,
 Couldst know thy favourite stone's
 elected right
 As tryst-place for thy Tuscans to
 foresee
 Their earliest chartas from! good
 night, good morn,
 Henceforward, Dante! now my
 soul is sure

That thine is better comforted of
 scorn,
 And looks down from the stars in
 fuller cure,
 Than when, in Santa Croce church,
 forlorn
 Of any corpse, the architect and
 hewer
 Did pile the empty marbles as thy
 tomb!
 For now thou art no longer exiled,
 now
 Best honoured!—we salute thee who
 art come
 Back to the old stone with a softer
 brow
 Than Giotto drew upon the wall, for
 some
 Good lovers of our age to track and
 plough
 Their way to, through Time's ordures
 stratified,
 And startle broad awake into the
 dull
 Bargello chamber. Now, thou'rt
 milder-eyed,
 And Beatrix may leap up glad to
 cull
 Thy first smile, even in heaven and at
 her side,
 Like that which, nine years old,
 looked beautiful
 At Tuscan May-game. Foolish
 words! I meant
 Only that Dante loved his Florence
 well,
 And Florence, now, to love him is
 content!
 I mean too, certes, that the sweetest
 smell
 Of love's dear incense, by the living
 sent
 To find the dead, is not acces-
 sible
 To your low livers! no narcotic,—
 not
 Swung in a censer to a sleepy
 tune,—
 But trod out in the morning air, by
 hot
 Quick spirits, who tread firm to ends
 foreshown,
 And use the name of greatness unfor-
 got,
 To meditate what greatness may be
 done.

XVI

For Dante sits in heaven, and ye
stand here,
And more remains for doing, all
must feel,
Than trysting on his stone from year
to year
To shift processions, civic heel to
heel,
The town's thanks to the Pitti. Are
ye freer
For what was felt that day? A
chariot wheel
May spin fast, yet the chariot never
roll.
But if that day suggested some-
thing good,
And bettered, with one purpose, soul
by soul,—
Better means freer. A land's
brotherhood
Is most puissant! Men, upon the
whole,
Are what they can be,—nations,
what they would.

XVII

Will, therefore, to be strong, thou
Italy!
Will to be noble! Austrian Met-
ternich
Can fix no yoke unless the neck agree;
And thine is like the lion's when
the thick
Dews shudder from it, and no man
would be
The stroker of his mane, much less
would prick
His nostril with a reed. When
nations roar
Like lions, who shall tame them,
and defraud
Of the due pasture by the river-shore?
Roar, therefore! shake your dew-
laps dry abroad.
The amphitheatre with open door
Leads back upon the benches who
applaud
The last spear-thruster!

XVIII

Yet the Heavens forbid
That we should call on passion to
confront
The brutal with the brutal, and, amid
This ripening world, suggest a lion-
hunt

And lion-vengeance for the wrongs
men did

And do now, though the spears are
getting blunt.

We only call, because the sight and
proof

Of lion-strength hurts nothing; and
to show

A lion-heart, and measure paw with
hoof,

Helps something, even, and will
instruct a foe

Well as the onslaught, how to stand
aloof!

Or else the world gets past the mere
brute blow

Given or taken. Children use the
fist

Until they are of age to use the
brain:

And so we needed Cæsars to assist
Man's justice, and Napoleons to

explain

God's counsel, when a point was
nearly missed,

Until our generations should
attain

Christ's stature nearer. Not that we,
alas!

Attain already; but a single inch
Will help to look down on the sword-
man's pass,

As Roland on a coward who could
flinch;

And, after chloroform and ether-gas,
We find out slowly what the bee

and finch

Have ready found, through Natures'
lamp in each,—

How to our races we may justify
Our individual claims, and, as we

reach

Our own grapes, bend the top vines
to supply

The children's uses: how to fill a
breach

With olive branches; how to
quench a lie

With truth, and smite a foe upon the
cheek

With Christ's most conquering
kiss! why, these are things

Worth a great nation's finding, to
prove weak

The "glorious arms" of military
kings!

And so with wide embrace, my England, seek

To stifle the bad heat and flickerings

Of this world's false and nearly expended fire!

Draw palpitating arrows to the wood,

And send abroad thy high hopes, and thy higher

Resolves, from that most virtuous altitude,

Till nations shall unconsciously aspire
By looking up to thee, and learn that good

And glory are not different. Announce law

By freedom; exalt chivalry by peace;

Instruct how clear calm eyes can overawe,

And how pure hands, stretched simply to release

A bond-slave, will not need a sword to draw

To be held dreadful. O my England, cease

Thy purple with no alien agonies
Which reach thee through the net

Of war! No war!

Disband thy captains, change thy victories,

Be henceforth prosperous as the angels are—

Helping, not humbling.

XIX

Drums and battle cries

Go out in music of the morning star—

And soon we shall have thinkers in the place

Of fighters; each found able as a man

To strike electric influence through a race,

Unstayed by city-wall and barbarian.

The poet shall look grander in the face
Than ever he looked of old, when

he began

To sing that "Achilleian wrath which slew

So many heroes,"—seeing he shall treat

The deeds of souls heroic toward the true—

The oracles of life—provisions sweet
And awful, like divine swans gliding through

White arms of Leda, which will leave the heat

Of their escaping godship to endure
The human medium with a heavenly flush.

Meanwhile, in this same Italy we want
Not popular passion, to arise and crush,

But popular conscience, which may covenant

For what it knows. Concede without a blush—

To grant the "civic guard" is not to grant

The civic spirit, living and awake.
Those lappets on your shoulders, citizens,

Your eyes strain after sideways till they ache,

While still, in admirations and amens,
The crowd comes up on festa-days,

to take

The great sight in—are not intelligence,

Not courage even—alas, if not the sign

Of something very noble, they are nought;

For every day ye dress your fallow kine

With fringes down their cheeks, though unbesought

They lol their heavy heads and drag the wine,

And bear the wooden yoke as they were taught

The first day. What ye want is light—indeed

Not sunlight—(ye may well look up surprised

To those unfathomable heavens that feed

Your purple hills!)—but God's light organised

In some high soul, crowned capable to lead

The conscious people,—conscious and advised,—

For if we lift a people like mere clay,
It falls the same. We want thee, O

unfound

And sovran teacher! if thy beard be grey

Or black, we bid thee rise up from the ground

And speak the word God giveth thee to say,

Inspiring into all this people round,
Instead of passion, thought, which pioneers

All generous passion, purifies from sin,
And strikes the hour for. Rise thou teacher! here's

A crowd to make a nation!—best begin

By making each a man, till all be peers

Of earth's true patriots and pure martyrs in

Knowing and daring. Best unbar the doors

Which Peter's heirs keep locked so overclose

They only let the mice across the floors,

While every churchman dangles as he goes

The great key at his girdle, and abhors

In Christ's name, meekly. Open wide the house—

Concede the entrance with Christ's liberal mind,

And set the tables with His wine and bread,

What! commune in "both kinds?" In every kind—

Wine, wafer, love, hope, truth, unlimited,

Nothing kept back. For, when a man is blind

To starlight, will he see the rose is red?
A bondsman shivering at a Jesuit's foot—

"Væ! mea culpa!" is not like to stand
A freedman at a despot's, and dispute

His titles by the balance in his hand,
Weighing them "suo jure." Tend the root,

If careful of the branches; and expand

The inner souls of men, before you strive

For civic heroes.

xx

But the teacher, where?

From all these crowded faces, all alive,—

B.P.

Eyes, of their own lids flashing themselves bare,—

And brows that with a mobile life contrive

A deeper shadow,—may we not wise dare

To point a finger out, and touch a man,

And cry "this is the leader." What, all these!—

Broad heads, black eyes,—yet not a soul that ran

From God down with a message? All, to please

The donna waving measures with her fan,

And not the judgment-angel on his knees—

The trumpet just an inch off from his lips—

Who when he breathes next, will put out the sun?

Yet mankind's self were foundered in eclipse,

If lacking, with a great work to be done,

A doer. No, the earth already dips
Back into light—a better day's begun—

And soon this doer, teacher, will stand plain,

And build the golden pipes and synthesize

This people-organ for a holy strain:
And we who hope thus, still in all these eyes,

Go sounding for the deep look which shall drain

Suffused thought into channelled enterprise!

Where is the teacher? What now may he do,

Who shall do greatly? Doth he gird his waist

With a monk's rope, like Luther? or pursue

The goat, like Tell? or dry his nets in haste,

Like Masaniello when the sky was blue?

Keep house like any peasant, with inlaced,

Bare, brawny arms about his favourite child,

And meditative looks beyond the door?—

(But not to mark the kidling's
teeth have filed
The green shoots of his vine which last
year bore
Full twenty bunches ;) or, on triple-
piled
Throne-velvets, shall we see him
bless the poor,
Like any Pontiff, in the Poorest's
name,—
While the tiara holds itself aslope
Upon his steady brows, which, all
the same,
Bend mildly to permit the people's
hope?

XXI

Whatever hand shall grasp this
oriflamme,
Whatever man (last peasant or first
Pope
Seeking to free his country !)
shall appear,
Teach, lead, strike fire into the masses,
fill
These empty bladders with fine
air, insphere
These wills into a unity of will,
And make of Italy a nation—dear
And blessed be that man ! the
Heavens shall kill
No leaf the earth shall grow for
him ; and Death
Shall cast him back upon the lap of
Life,
To live more surely, in a clarion-
breath
Of hero-music ! Brutus, with the
knife,
Rienzi, with the fasces, throb be-
neath
Rome's stones ; and more, who threw
away joy's life
Like Pallas, that the beauty of their
souls
Might ever shine untroubled and
entire !
But if it can be true that he who
rolls
The Church's thunders will reserve
her fire
The only light ; from eucharistic
bowls
Will pour new life for nations that
expire,
And rend the scarlet of his Papal
vest

To gird the weak loins of his country-
men—
I hold that man surpasses all the
rest
Of Romans, heroes, patriots,—and
that when
He sat down on the throne, he
dispossessed
The first graves of some glory. See
again,
This country-saving is a glorious
thing !
Why, say a common man achieved
it ? Well !
Say, a rich man did ? Excellent !
A king ?
That grows sublime ! A priest ?
Improbable !
A Pope ? Ah, there we stop and
cannot bring
Our faith up to the leap, with history's
bell
So heavy round the neck of it—
albeit
We fain would grant the possibility
For *thy* sake, Pio Nono !

XXII

Stretch thy feet
In that case—I will kiss them rever-
ently
As any pilgrim to the Papal seat !
And, such proved possible, thy throne
to me
Shall seem as holy a place as Pel-
lico's
Venetian dungeon ; or as Spielberg's
grate,
Where the fair Lombard woman
hung the rose
Of her sweet soul, by its own dewy
weight,
(Because her sun shone *inside* to
the close !)
And pining so, died early, yet too late
For what she suffered ! Yea, I
will not choose
Betwixt thy throne, Pope Pius, and
the spot
Marked red for ever spite of rains
and dews,
Where two fell riddled by the Aus-
trian's shot—
The brothers Bandiera, who accuse,
With one same mother-voice and
face (that what

They speak may be invincible), the
sins
Of earth's tormentors before God, the
Just,
Until the unconscious thunder-bolt
begins
To loosen in His grasp.

xxiii

And yet we must
Beware, and mark the natural kiths
and kins
Of circumstance and office, and dis-
trust
A rich man reasoning in a poor
man's hut
A poet who neglects pure truth to
prove
Statistic fact ; a child who leaves a
rut
For the smooth road ; a priest who
vows his glove
Exhales no grace ; a prince who
walks a-foot ;
A woman who has sworn she will not
love ;
Ninth Pius sitting in Seventh
Gregory's chair,
With Andrea Doria's forehead !

xxiv

Count what goes
To making up a Pope, before he
wear
That triple crown. We pass the
world-wide throes
Which went to make the Popedom,
—the despair
Of free men, good men, wise men ;
the dread shows
Of women's faces, by the faggot's
flash,
Tossed out, to the minutest stir and
throb
Of the white lips, least tremble of
a lash,
To glut the red stare of the licensed
mob !
The short mad cries down oubliettes,
—the plash
So horribly far off ! priests, trained
to rob ;
And kings that, like encouraged
nightmares, sate
On nations' hearts most heavily dis-
tressed

With monstrous sights and apo-
phthegms of fate.
We pass these things,—because " the
times " are prest

With necessary charges of the
weight
Of all the sin ; and " Calvin, for
the rest,
Made bold to burn Servetus—Ah,
men err ! "—

And, so do *Churches* ! which is all we
mean

To bring to proof in any register
Of theological fat kine and lean—
So drive them back into the pens !
refer

Old sins with long beards, and " I wis
and ween,"

Entirely to the times—the times—
the times !

Nor ever ask why this preponderant,
Infallible, pure Church could set
her chimes

Most loudly then, just then ; most
jubilant,

Precisely then—when mankind
stood in crimes

Full heart-deep, and Heaven's judg-
ments were not scant.

Inquire still less, what signifies a
Church

Of perfect inspiration and pure laws,
Who burns the first man with a
brimstone torch,

And grinds the second, bone by bone,
because

The times, forsooth, are used to
rack and scorch !

What is a holy Church, unless she awes
The times down from their sins ?

Did Christ select
Such amiable times, to come and teach

Love to, and mercy? Why, the
world were wrecked

If every mere great man, who lives to
reach

A little leaf of popular respect,
Attained not simply by some special

breach
In his land's customs,—by some
precedence

In thought and act—which, having
proved him higher

Than his own times, proved too his
competence

Of helping them to wonder and aspire.

xxv

My words are guiltless of the bigot's
sense !
My soul has fire to mingle with the
fire
Of all these souls, within or out of
doors
Of Rome's Church or another. I
believe
In one priest, and one temple, with
its floors
Of shining jasper, gloom'd at morn
and eve
By countless knees of earnest
auditors ;
And crystal walls, too lucid to per-
ceive,—
That none may take the measure
of the place
And say, "so far the porphyry ;
then, the flint—
To this mark, mercy goes, and
there, ends grace,"
While still the permeable crystals hint
At some white starry distance,
bathed in space !
I feel how nature's ice-crusts keep
the dint
Of undersprings of silent Deity ;
I hold the articulated gospels, which
Show Christ among us, crucified on
tree ;
I love all who love truth, if poor or
rich
In what they have won of truth
possessively !
No altars and no hands defiled with
pitch
Shall scare me off, but I will pray
and eat
With all these—taking leave to
choose my ewers
And say at last, "Your visible
Churches cheat
Their inward types ; and if a Church
assures
Of standing without failure and de-
feat,
That Church both fails and lies !"

xxvi

To leave which lures
Of wider subject through past
years,—behold,
We come back from the Popedom to
the Pope,

To ponder what he *must* be, ere we
are bold
For what he *may* be, with our heavy
hope
To trust upon his soul. So, fold by
fold,
Explore this mummy in the priestly
cope
Transmitted through the darks of
time, to catch
The man within the wrappage, and
discern
How he, an honest man, upon the
watch
Full fifty years, for what a man may
learn,
Contrived to get just there ; with
what a snatch
Of old world oboli he had to earn
The passage through ; with what
a drowsy sop
To drench the busy barkings of his
brain ;
What ghosts of pale tradition,
wreathed with hop
'Gainst wakeful thought, he had to
entertain
For heavenly visions ; and consent
to stop
The clock at noon, and let the hour
remain
(Without vain windings up) invio-
late,
Against all chimings from the belfry.
Lo !
From every given pope, you must
abate,
Albeit you love him, some things—
good, you know—
Which every given heretic you
hate
Claims for his own, as being plainly
so.
A pope must hold by popes a little,
—yes,
By councils,—from Nicæa up to
Trent,—
By hierocratic empire, more or
less
Irresponsible to men,—he must re-
sent
Each man's particular conscience,
and repress
Inquiry, meditation, argument,
As tyrants faction. Also, he must
not

Love truth too dangerously, but
 prefer
 "The interests of the Church,"
 because a blot
 Is better than a rent in miniver,—
 Submit to see the people swallow
 hot
 Husk-porridge which his chartered
 churchmen stir
 Quoting the only true God's
 epigraph,
 "Feed my lambs, Peter!"—must
 consent to sit
 Attesting with his pastoral ring and
 staff,
 To such a picture of our Lady, hit
 Off well by artist angels, though
 not half
 As fair as Giotto would have painted
 it;
 To such a vial, where a dead man's
 blood
 Runs yearly warm beneath a church-
 man's finger;
 To such a holy house of stone and
 wood,
 Whereof a cloud of angels was the
 bringer
 From Bethlehem to Loreto!—
 Were it good
 For any pope on earth to be a finger
 Of stones against these high-
 niched counterfeits?
 Apostates only are iconoclasts.
 He dares not say, while this false
 thing abets
 That true thing, "this is false!"
 he keepeth fasts
 And prayers, as prayers and fasts
 were silver frets
 To change a note upon a string that
 lasts,
 And make a lie a virtue. Now,
 if he
 Did more than this,—higher hoped
 and braver dared,—
 I think he were a pope in jeopardy,
 Or no pope rather! for his soul had
 barred
 The vaulting of his life. And
 certainly,
 If he do only this, mankind's regard
 Moves on from him at once, to seek
 some new
 Teacher and leader! He is good
 and great

According to the deeds a pope can
 do;
 Most liberal, save those bonds; affec-
 tionate,
 As princes may be; and, as priests
 are, true—
 But only the ninth Pius after eight,
 When all's praised most. At best
 and hopefullest,
 He's pope—we want a man! his
 heart beats warm,
 But, like the prince enchanted to
 the waist,
 He sits in stone, and hardens by a
 charm
 Into the marble of his throne high-
 placed!
 Mild benediction, waves his saintly
 arm—
 So good! but what we want's a
 perfect man,
 Complete and all alive: half travert-
 ine
 Half suits our need, and ill sub-
 serves our plan.
 Feet, knees, nerves, sinews, energies
 divine
 Were never yet too much for men
 who ran
 In such exalted ways as this of thine,
 Deliver whom we seek, whoe'er
 thou art,
 Pope, prince, or peasant! If, indeed,
 the first,
 The noblest, therefore! since the
 heroic heart
 Within thee must be great enough to
 burst
 Those trammels buckling to the
 baser part
 Thy saintly peers in Rome, who
 crossed and cursed
 With the same finger.

XXVII

Come, appear, be found,
 If pope or peasant, come! we hear the
 cock,
 The courtier of the mountains
 when first crowned
 With golden dawn; and orient
 glories flock
 To meet the sun upon the highest
 ground.
 Take voice and work! we wait to
 hear thee knock

At some one of our Florentine nine
gates,
On each of which was imaged a
sublime
Face of a Tuscan genius, which,
for hate's
And love's sake both, our Florence
in her prime
Turned boldly on all comers to her
states,
As heroes turned their shields in
antique time,
Blazoned with honourable acts.
And though
The gates are blank now of such
images,
And Petrarch looks no more from
Nicolo
Toward dear Arezzo, 'twixt the
acacia trees,
Nor Dante, from gate Gallo—still
we know,
Despite the razing of the blazonries,
Remains the consecration of the
shield,—
The dead heroic faces will start out
On all these gates, if foes should
take the field,
And blend sublimely, at the earliest
shout,
With our live fighters, who will
scorn to yield
A hair's-breadth ev'n, when, gazing
round about,
They find in what a glorious com-
pany
They fight the foes of Florence!
Who will grudge
His one poor life, when that great
man we see,
Has given five hundred years, the
world being judge,
To help the glory of his Italy?
Who, born the fair side of the Alps,
will budge,
When Dante stays, when Ariosto
stays,
When Petrarch stays, for ever? Ye
bring swords,
My Tuscans? Why, if wanted in
this haze,
Bring swords, but first bring souls!—
bring thoughts and words
Untrused by a tear of yesterday's,
Yet awful by its wrong, and cut these
cords

And mow this green lush falseness
to the roots,
And shut the mouth of hell below the
swathe!
And if ye can bring songs too, let
the lute's
Recoverable music softly bathe
Some poet's hand, that, through
all bursts and bruits
Of popular passion—all unripe and
rather
Convictions of the popular intel-
lect—
Ye may not lack a finger up the air,
Annunciative, reproving, pure,
erect,
To show which way your first Ideal
bare
The whiteness of its wings, when,
sorely pecked
By falcons on your wrists, it unaware
Arose up overhead, and out of sight.

xxviii

Meanwhile, let all the far ends of the
world
Breathe back the deep breath of
their old delight,
To swell the Italian banner just un-
furled.
Help, lands of Europe! for, if
Austria fight,
The drums will bar your slumber.
Who had curled
The laurel for your thousand
artists' brows,
If these Italian hands had planted
none?
And who can sit down idle in the
house,
Nor hear appeals from Buonarrotti's
stone
And Raffael's canvas, rousing and
to rouse?
Where's Poussin's master? Gallic
Avignon
Bred Laura, and Vaucluse's fount
has stirred
The heart of France too strongly,—
as it lets
Its little stream out, like a wizard's
bird
Which bounds upon its emerald
wings, and wets
The rocks on each side—that she
should not grid

Her loins with Charlemagne's sword,
 when foes beset
 The country of her Petrarch.
 Spain may well
 Be minded how from Italy she caught,
 To mingle with her tinkling Moor-
 ish bell,
 A fuller cadence and a subtler thought;
 And even the New World, the
 receptacle
 Of freemen, may send glad men, as
 it ought,
 To greet Vespucci Amerigo's door;
 While England claims, by trump of
 poetry,
 Verona, Venice, the Ravenna shore,
 And dearer holds her Milton's Fiesole
 Than Malvern with a sunset run-
 ning o'er.

XXIX

And Vallombrosa, we two went to see
 Last June, beloved companion,—
 where sublime
 The mountains live in holy families,
 And the slow pinewoods ever
 climb and climb
 Half up their breasts; just stagger
 as they seize
 Some grey crag—drop back with
 it many a time,
 And straggle blindly down the preci-
 pice!
 The Vallombrosan brooks were
 strewn as thick
 That June-day, knee-deep, with
 dead beechen leaves,
 As Milton saw them ere his heart
 grew sick,
 And his eyes blind. I think the
 monks and bees
 Are all the same too: scarce they
 have changed the wick
 On good St. Gualbert's altar, which
 receives
 The convent's pilgrims; and the
 pool in front
 Wherein the hill-stream trout are
 cast, to wait
 The beatific vision, and the grunt
 Used at refectory, keeps its weedy
 state,
 To baffle saintly abbots, who
 would count
 The fish across their breviary, nor
 'bate

The measure of their steps. O
 waterfalls
 And forests! sound and silence!
 mountains bare.
 That leap up peak by peak, and
 catch the palls
 Of purple and silver mist, to rend
 and share
 With one another, at electric calls
 Of life in the sunbeams,—till we can-
 not dare
 Fix your shapes, learn your num-
 ber! we must think
 Your beauty and your glory helped
 to fill
 The cup of Milton's soul so to the
 brink,
 That he no more was thirsty when
 God's will
 Had shattered to his sense the
 last chain-link
 By which he drew from Nature's
 visible
 The fresh well-water. Satisfied by
 this,
 He sang of Adam's Paradise and
 smiled,
 Remembering Vallombrosa. There-
 fore is
 The place divine to English man and
 child—
 We all love Italy.

xxx

Our Italy's

The darling of the earth—the trea-
 sury, piled
 With reveries of gentle ladies, flung
 Aside, like ravelled silk, from life's
 worn stuff—
 With coins of scholars' fancy,
 which, being rung
 On work-day counter, still sound
 silver-proof—
 In short, with all the dreams of
 dreamers young,
 Before their heads have time for
 slipping off
 Hope's pillow to the ground.
 How oft, indeed,
 We all have sent our souls out from
 the north,
 On bare white feet which would not
 print nor bleed,
 To climb the Alpine passes and look
 forth,

Where the low murmuring Lombard rivers lead
 Their bee-like way to gardens almost worth
 The sight which thou and I see afterward
 From Tuscan Bellosguardo, wide awake,
 When standing on the actual, blessed sward
 Where Galileo stood at nights to take
 The vision of the stars, we find it hard,
 Gazing upon the earth and heaven, to make
 A choice of beauty. Therefore let us all
 In England, or in any other land
 Refreshed once by the fountain-rise and fall
 Of dreams of this fair south,—who understand
 A little how the Tuscan musical Vowels
 Do round themselves, as if they plann'd
 Eternities of separate sweetness,—we
 Who loved Sorrento vines in picture-book,
 Or ere in wine-cup we pledged faith or glee—
 Who loved Rome's wolf, with demigods at suck,
 Or ere we loved truth's own divinity,—
 Who loved, in brief, the classic hill and brook,
 And Ovid's dreaming tales, and Petrarch's song,
 Or ere we loved Love's self!—why, let us give
 The blessing of our souls, and wish them strong
 To bear it to the height where prayers arrive,
 When faithful spirits pray against a wrong;
 To this great cause of southern men, who strive
 In God's name for man's rights, and shall not fail!

XXXI

Behold, they shall not fail. The shouts ascend

Above the shrieks, in Naples, and prevail.
 Rows of shot corpses, waiting for the end
 Of burial, seem to smile up straight and pale
 Into the azure air, and apprehend
 That final gun-flash from Palermo's coast,
 Which lightens their apocalypse of death.
 So let them die! The world shows nothing lost;
 Therefore, not blood! Above or underneath,
 What matter, brothers, if we keep our post
 On truth's and duty's side? As sword to sheath,
 Dust turns to grave, but souls find place in Heaven.
 O friends, heroic daring is success,
 The eucharistic bread requires no leaven;
 And though your ends were hopeless, we should bless
 Your cause as holy! Strive—and, having striven,
 Take, for God's recompense, that righteousness!

PART II

I

I wrote a meditation and a dream,
 Hearing a little child sing in the street
 I leant upon his music as a theme,
 Till it gave way beneath my heart's full beat,
 Which tried at an exultant prophecy
 But dropped before the measure was complete—
 Alas, for songs and hearts! O Tuscany,
 O Dante's Florence, is the type too plain?
 Didst thou, too, only sing of liberty,
 As little children take up a high strain
 With unintentioned voices, and break off
 To sleep upon their mothers' knees again?
 Couldst thou not watch one hour?
 Then, sleep enough—

That sleep may hasten manhood,
and sustain
The faint pale spirit with some mus-
cular stuff.

II

But we, who cannot slumber as
thou dost,
We thinkers, who have thought for
thee and failed,—
We hoppers, who have hoped for
thee and lost,—
We poets, wandered round by
dreams,¹ who hailed
From this Atrides' roof (with
lintel-post
Which still drips blood,—the worse
part hath prevailed)
The fire-voice of the beacons, to
declare
Troy taken, sorrow ended,—cozened
through
A crimson sunset in a misty air,—
What now remains for such as we, to
do?
—God's judgments, peradventure,
will He bare
To the roots of thunder, if we kneel
and sue?

III

From Casa Guidi windows I looked
forth,
And saw ten thousand eyes of
Florentines
Flash back the triumph of the
Lombard north,—
Saw fifty banners, freighted with
the signs
And exultations of the awakened
earth,
Float on above the multitude in lines,
Straight to the Pitti. So, the
vision went,
And so, between those populous rough
hands
Raised in the sun, Duke Leopold
outleant,
And took the patriot's oath, which
henceforth stands
Among the oaths of perjurers,
eminent
To catch the lightnings ripened for
these lands.

¹ Referring to the well-known opening passage
of the "Agamemnon" of Æschylus.

IV

Why swear at all, thou false Duke
Leopold?
What need to swear? What need
to boast thy blood
Taintless of Austria, and thy heart
unsold
Away from Florence? It was under-
stood
God made thee not too vigorous
or too bold,
And men had patience with thy quiet
mood,
And women, pity, as they saw thee
pace
Their festive streets with premature
grey hairs:
We turned the mild dejection of
thy face
To princely meanings, took thy
wrinkling cares
For ruffling hopes, and called thee
weak, not base.
Better to light the torches for more
prayers
And smoke the pale Madonnas at
the shrine,
Being still "our poor Grand-duke,"
"our good Grand-duke,"
"Who cannot help the Austrian
in his line,"
Than write an oath upon a nation's
book
For men to spit at with scorn's
blurring brine!
Who dares forgive what none can
overlook?

V

For me, I do repent me in this dust
Of towns and temples, which makes
Italy,—
I sigh amid the sighs which breathe
a gust
Of dying century to century,
Around us on the uneven crater-
crust
Of the old worlds,—I bow my soul
and knee,
And sigh and do repent me of my
fault
That ever I believed the man was
true.
These sceptred strangers shun the
common salt,
And, therefore, when the general
board's in view,

They standing up to carve for
blind and halt,
We should suspect the viands which
ensue.

And I repent that in this time and
place,
Where all the corpse-lights of experi-
ence burn

From Cæsar's and Lorenzo's fester-
ing race,
To illumine groping reasoners, I could
learn

No better counsel for a simple
case
Than to put faith in princes, in my
turn.

Heavens! had the death-piles of
the ancient years
Flared up in vain before me? Knew
I not

What stench arises from their
purple gears,—
And how the sceptres witness whence
they got

Their briar-wood, crackling through
the atmosphere's
Foul smoke, by princely perjuries,
kept hot?

Forgive me, ghosts of patriots,—
Brutus, thou,
Who trailest downhill into life again
Thy blood-weighed cloak, to indict
me with thy slow

Reproachful eyes!—for being taught
in vain

That while the illegitimate Cæsars
show

Of meaner stature than the first full
strain,
(Confessed incompetent to conquer
Gaul)

They swoon as feebly and cross
Rubicons

As rashly as any Julius of them all.
Forgive, that I forgot the mind that
runs

Through absolute races, too unscep-
tical!

I saw the man among his little sons,
His lips warm with their kisses
while he swore,—

And I, because I am a woman, I,
Who felt my own child's coming
life before

The prescience of my soul, and held
faith high,

I could not bear to think, whoever
bore,
That lips, so warmed, could shape so
cold a lie.

VI

From Casa Guidi windows I looked
out,
Again looked, and beheld a different
sight.

The Duke had fled before the
people's shout

"Long live the Duke!" A people,
to speak right,
Should speak as soft as courtiers,
lest a doubt

Turn gracious sovereign brows to
curdled white.

Moreover that same dangerous
shouting meant

Some gratitude for future favours,
which

Were only promised;—the Con-
stituent

Implied;—the whole being subject to
the hitch

In motu proprios, very incident
To all these Czars, from Paul to Paul-
ovitch.

Whereat the people rose up in the
dust

Of the Duke's flying feet, and shouted
still,

And loudly, only, this time, as was
just,

Not "Live the Duke," who had fled,
for good or ill,

But "Live the People," who re-
mained and must,

The unrenounced and unrenounce-
able.

VII

Long live the people! How they
lived! and boiled

And bubbled in the cauldron of the
street!

How the young blustered, nor the
old recoiled,

And what a thunderous stir of tongues
and feet

Trod flat the palpitating bells, and
foiled

The joy-guns of their echo, shattering
it!

How they pulled down the Duke's
arms everywhere!

How they set up new café-signs, to show
 Where patriots might sip ices in pure air—
 (Yet the fresh paint smelt somewhat).
 To and fro
 How marched the civic guard, and stopped to stare
 When boys broke windows in a civic glow.
 How rebel songs were sung to loyal tunes,
 And the pope cursed, in ecclesiastic metres!
 How all the Circoli grew large as moons,
 And all the speakers, moonstruck!—thankful greeters
 Of prospects which struck poor the ducal boons,
 A mere free press, and chambers!—frank repeaters
 Of great Guerazzi's praises. . . .
 "There's a man
 The father of the land!—who, truly great,
 Takes off that national disgrace and ban,
 The farthing tax upon our Florence-gate,
 And saves Italia as he only can."
 How all the nobles fled, and would not wait,
 Because they were most noble! which being so,
 How the mob vowed to burn their palaces,
 Because they were too free to have leave to go.
 How grown men raged at Austria's wickedness,
 And smoked,—while fifty strip-lings in a row
 Marched straight to Piedmont for the wrong's redress!
 Who says we failed in duty, we who wore
 Black velvet like Italian democrats,
 Who slashed our sleeves like patriots, nor forswore
 The true republic in the form of hats?
 We chased the Archbishop from the Duomo door—
 We chalked the walls with bloody caveats

Against all tyrants. If we did not fight
 Exactly, we fired muskets up the void,
 To show that victory was ours of right.
 We met, discussed in every place, self-buoyed
 Except, perhaps, i' the chambers, day and night:
 We proved that all the poor should be employed,
 And yet the rich not worked for anywise,—
 Pay certified, yet payers abrogated,
 Full work secured, yet liabilities
 To over-work excluded,—not one bated
 Of all our holidays, that still, at twice
 Or thrice a-week, are moderately rated.
 We proved that Austria was dislodged, or would
 Or should be, and that Tuscany in arms
 Should, would, dislodge her, in high hardihood!
 And yet, to leave our piazzas, shops, and farms,
 For the bare sake of fighting, was not good.
 We proved that also—"Did we carry charms
 Against being killed ourselves, that we should rush
 On killing others? What! desert herewith
 Our wives and mothers!—was that duty? Tush!"
 At which we shook the sword within the sheath,
 Like heroes—only louder! and the flush
 Ran up our cheek to meet the victor's wreath.
 Nay, what we proved, we shouted—how we shouted
 (Especially the little boys did), planting
 That tree of liberty whose fruit is doubted
 Because the roots are not of nature's granting—
 A tree of good and evil!—none, without it,
 Grow gods!—alas, and, with it, men were wanting.

VIII

O holy knowledge, holy liberty,
 O holy rights of nations! If I speak
 These bitter things against the
 jugglery of names proved
 Of days that in your name
 blind and weak. When
 It is that tears are bitter
 we see
 The brown skulls grin at death in
 churchyards bleak, trick is too
 We do not cry, "This Your
 light,"—
 For death grows deathlier with that
 mouth he makes. For things
 So with my mocking. Bitter
 I write,
 Because my soul is bitter for your
 sakes,
 O freedom! O my Florence!

IX

Men who make
 Do greatly in a universe that breaks
 And burns, must ever know before
 they do.
 Courage and patience are but sacrifice;
 And sacrifice is offered for and to
 Something conceived of. Each man
 pays a price
 For what himself counts precious acts,
 whether true
 Or false the appreciation it implies. At
 Here, was no knowledge, no conception,
 tion, nought!
 Desire was absent, that provides great
 deeds
 From out the greatness of preven-
 ient thought;
 And action, action, like a flame that
 needs
 A steady breath and fuel, being
 caught
 Up, like a burning reed from other
 reeds,
 Flashed in the empty and uncertain
 air,
 Then wavered, then went out. Be-
 hold, who blames
 A crooked course, when not a goal
 is there,
 To round the fervid striving of the
 games?
 An ignorance of means may minis-
 ter

To greatness, but an ignorance of
 aims
 Makes it impossible to be great at
 all.
 So, with our Tuscans! Let none dare
 to say,
 Here virtue never can be national,
 Here fortitude can never cut its way
 Between the Austrian muskets, out
 of thrall.
 I tell you rather, that whoever may
 Discern true ends here, shall grow
 pure enough
 To love them, brave enough to strive
 for them,
 And strong to reach them, though
 the roads be rough:
 That having learnt—by no mere
 apophthegm—
 Not the mere draping of a graceful
 stuff
 About a statue, brodered at the
 hem,—
 Not the mere trilling on an opera
 stage,
 Of "libertà" to bravos—(a fair word,
 Yet too allied to inarticulate rage
 And breathless sobs, for singing,
 though the chord
 Were deeper than they struck it!)
 —but the gauge
 Of civil wants sustained, and wrongs
 abhorred,—
 The serious, sacred meaning and
 full use
 Of freedom for a nation,—then, in-
 deed,
 Our Tuscans, underneath the bloody
 dews
 Of a new morning, rising up agreed
 And bold, will want no Saxon souls
 or thews,
 To sweep their piazzas clear of Aus-
 tria's breed.

X

Alas, alas! it was not so this time.
 Conviction was not, courage failed,
 and truth
 Was something to be doubted of.
 The mime
 Changed masks, because a mime; the
 tide as smooth
 In running in as out; no sense of
 crime
 Because no sense of virtue. Sudden
 ruth

Seized on the people . . . they
 would have again
 Their good Grand-duke, and leave
 Guerazzi, though
 He took that tax from Florence :—
 " Much in vain
 He took it from the market-carts, we
 trow,
 While urgent that no market-men
 remain,
 But all march off, and leave the spade
 and plough,
 To die among the Lombards. Was
 it thus
 The dear paternal Duke did ? Live
 the Duke !"
 At which the joy-bells multitudi-
 nous,
 Swept by an opposite wind, as loudly
 shook.
 Recall the mild Archbishop to his
 house,
 To bless the people with his frightened
 look,
 For he shall not be hanged yet, we
 intend.
 Seize on Guerazzi ; guard him in full
 view,
 Or else westab him in the back, to
 end.
 Rub out those chalked devices ! Set
 up new
 The Duke's arms ; doff your
 Phrygian caps ; and mend
 The pavement of the piazzas broke into
 By the bare poles of freedom !
 Smooth the way
 For the Duke's carriage, lest his high-
 ness sigh
 " Here trees of liberty grew yester-
 day."
 Long live the Duke !—How roared the
 cannonry,
 How rocked each campanile, and
 through a spray
 Of nosegays, wreaths, and kerchiefs,
 tossed on high,
 How marched the civic guard, the
 people still
 Shouting—especially the little boys !
 Alas, poor people, of an unfledged
 will
 Most fitly expressed by such a callow
 voice !
 Alas, still poorer Duke, incapable
 Of being worthy even of that noise !

XI

You think he came back instantly,
 with thanks
 And tears in his faint eyes, and hands
 extended
 To stretch the franchise through
 their utmost ranks ?
 That having, like a father, appre-
 hended,
 He came to pardon fatherly those
 pranks
 Played out, and now in filial service
 ended ?—
 That some love token, like a prince,
 he threw,
 To meet the people's love-call, in re-
 turn ?
 Well, how he came I will relate to
 you ;
 And if your hearts should burn, why,
 hearts *must* burn,
 To make the ashes which things old
 and new
 Shall be washed clean in—as this
 Duke will learn.

XII

From Casa Guidi windows, gazing
 then,
 I saw and witness how the Duke came
 back.
 The regular tramp of horse and
 tread of men
 Did smite the silence like an anvil
 black
 And sparkless. With her wide eyes
 at full strain,
 Our Tuscan nurse exclaimed, " Alack,
 alack,
 Signora ! these shall be the Aus-
 trians." " Nay,
 Hush, hush," I answered, " do not
 wake the child !"
 For so, my two-months' baby sleep-
 ing lay
 In milky dreams upon the bed and
 smiled ;
 And I thought " he shall sleep on,
 while he may,
 Through the world's baseness. Not
 being yet defiled,
 Why should he be disturbed by
 what is done ?"
 Then, gazing, I beheld the long-drawn
 street
 Live out, from end to end, full in
 the sun,

With Austria's thousands. Sword
and bayonet,
Horse, foot, artillery,—cannons
rolling on,
Like blind, slow storm-clouds gestant
with the heat
Of undeveloped lightnings, each
bestrode
By a single man, dust-white from
head to heel,
Indifferent as the dreadful thing he
rode,
Calm as a sculptured Fate, and ter-
rible !
As some smooth river which hath
overflowed,
Doth slow and silent down its current
wheel
A loosened forest, all the pines
erect,—
So, swept, in mute significance of
storm,
The marshalled thousands,—not an
eye deflect
To left or right, to catch a novel form
Of the famed city adorned by archi-
tect
And carver, nor of Beauties live and
warm
Scared at the casements,—all,
straightforward eyes
And faces, held as steadfast as their
swords,
And cognisant of acts, not imageries.
The key, O Tuscans, too well fits the
wards !
Ye asked for mimes ; these bring
you tragedies—
For purple ; these shall wear it as your
lords.
Ye played like children : die like
innocents !
Ye mimicked lightnings with a torch :
the crack
Of the actual bolt, your pastime,
circumvents.
Ye called up ghosts, believing they
were slack
To follow any voice from Gilboa's
tents, . . .
Here's Samuel !—and, so, Grand-
dukes come back !

XIII

And yet, they are no prophets
though they come.

That awful mantle they are drawing
close,
Shall be searched, one day, by the
shafts of Doom,
Through double folds now hoodwink-
ing the brows.
Resuscitated monarchs disentomb
Grave-reptiles with them, in their new
life-throes :
Let such beware. Behold, the
people waits,
Like God. As He, in His serene of
might,
So they, in their endurance of long
straits.
Ye stamp no nation out, though day
and night
Ye tread them with that absolute
heel which grates
And grinds them flat from all attempt-
ed height.
You kill worms sooner with a gar-
den-spade
Than you kill peoples : peoples will
not die ;
The tail curls stronger when you
lop the head ;
They writhe at every wound and
multiply,
And shudder into a heap of life
that's made
Thus vital from God's own vitality.
'Tis hard to shrivel back a day of
God's
Once fixed for judgment : 'tis as hard
to change
The people's, when they rise be-
neath their loads
And heave them from their backs
with violent wrench,
To crush the oppressor. For that
judgment rod's
The measure of this popular re-
venge.

XIV

Meantime, from Casa Guidi win-
dows we
Beheld the armament of Austria flow
Into the drowning heart of Tuscany.
And yet none wept, none cursed ; or,
if 'twas so,
They wept and cursed in silence.
Silently
Our noisy Tuscans watched the in-
vading foe ;

They had learnt silence. Pressed
 against he wall
 And grouped upon the church-steps
 opposite,
 A few pale men and women stared
 at all.
 God knows what they were feeling,
 with their white
 Constrained faces!—they, so pro-
 digal
 Of cry and gesture when the world
 goes right,
 Or wrong indeed. But here, was
 depth of wrong.
 And here, still water: they were silent
 here:
 And through that sentient silence,
 struck along
 That measured tramp from which it
 stood out clear,
 Distinct the sound and silence, like
 a gong
 Told upon midnight,—each made
 awfuller;
 While every soldier in his cap dis-
 played
 A leaf of olive. Dusty, bitter thing!
 Was such plucked at Novara, is it
 said?

xv

A cry is up in England, which doth ring
 The hollow world through, that for
 ends of trade
 And virtue, and God's better worship-
 ping,
 We henceforth should exalt the
 name of Peace,
 And leave those rusty wars that eat
 the soul,—
 (Besides their clippings at our
 golden fleece).
 I, too, have loved peace, and from
 bole to bole
 Of immemorial, undeciduous trees,
 Would write, as lovers use, upon a
 scroll
 The holy name of Peace, and set it
 high
 Where none should pluck it down.
 On trees, I say,—
 Not upon gibbets!—With the
 greenery
 Of dewy branches and the flowery
 May,
 Sweet mediation 'twixt the earth
 and sky,

Providing, for the shepherd's holiday!
 Not upon gibbets!—though the
 vulture leaves
 Some quiet to the bones he first
 picked bare.
 Not upon dungeons! though the
 wretch who grieves
 And groan within, stirs not the outer
 air
 As my little field-mice stir the
 sheaves.
 Not upon chain-bolts! though the
 slave's despair
 Has dulled his helpless, miserable
 brain,
 And left him blank beneath the free-
 man's whip,
 To sing and laugh out idiocies of
 pain.
 Nor yet on starving homes! where
 many a lip
 Has sobbed itself asleep through
 curses vain!
 I love no peace which is not fellowship,
 And which includes not mercy. I
 would have
 Rather, the raking of the guns across
 The world, and shrieks against
 Heaven's architrave.
 Rather, the struggle in the slippery
 fosse,
 Of dying men and horses, and the
 wave
 Blood-bubbling. . . . Enough said!
 —By Christ's own cross,
 And by the faint heart of my
 womanhood,
 Such things are better than a Peace
 which sits
 Beside the hearth in self-commend-
 ed mood,
 And takes no thought how wind and
 rain by fits
 Are hling out of doors against the
 good
 Of the poor wanderer. What! your
 peace admits
 Of outside anguish while it sits at
 home?
 I loathe to take its name upon my
 tongue—
 It is no peace. 'Tis treason, stiff
 with doom,—
 'Tis gagged despair, and inarticulate
 wrong,
 Annihilated Poland, stifled Rome,

Dazed Naples, Hungary fainting
 'neath the thong,
 And Austria wearing a smooth
 olive-leaf
 On her brute forehead, while her hoofs
 outpress
 The life from these Italian souls,
 in brief.
 O Lord of Peace, Whowart Lord of
 Righteousness,
 Constrain the anguished worlds
 from sin and grief,
 Pierce them with conscience, purge
 them with redress,
 And give us peace which is no
 counterfeit!

xvi

But wherefore should we look out any
 more
 From Casa Guidi windows? Shut
 them straight;
 And let us sit down by the folded door
 And veil our saddened faces, and so,
 wait
 What next the judgment-heavens
 make ready for.
 I have grown weary of these win-
 dows. Sights
 Come thick enough and clear enough
 with thought,
 Without the sunshine; souls have
 inner lights:
 And since the Grand-duke has come
 back and brought
 This army of the North which thus
 requites
 His filial South, we leave him to be
 taught.
 His South, too, has learnt some-
 thing certainly,
 Whereof the practice will bring profit
 soon;
 And peradventure other eyes may
 see,
 From Casa Guidi windows, what is
 done
 Or undone. Whatsoever deeds
 they be,
 Pope Pius will be glorified in none.

xvii

Record that gain, Mazzini!—it
 shall top
 Some heights of sorrow. Peter's rock,
 so named,
 Shall lure no vessel, any more, to
 drop

Among the breakers. Peter's chair
 is shamed
 Like any vulgar throne the nations
 lop
 To pieces for their firewood unre-
 claimed;
 And, when it burns too, we shall see
 as well
 In Italy as elsewhere. Let it burn.
 The cross, accounted still adorable,
 Is Christ's cross only!—if the thief's
 would earn
 Some stealthy genuflexions, we re-
 bel;
 And here the impenitent thief's has
 had its turn,
 As God knows; and the people on
 their knees
 Scoff and toss back the croziers,
 stretched like yokes
 To press their heads down lower
 by degrees.
 So Italy, by means of these last
 strokes,
 Escapes the danger which preceded
 these,
 Of leaving captured hands in cloven
 oaks . . .
 Of leaving very souls within the
 buckle
 Whence bodies struggled outward . . .
 of supposing
 That freemen may like bondsmen
 kneel and truckle,
 And then stand up as usual, without
 losing
 An inch of stature.
 Those whom she-wolves suckle
 Will bite as wolves do, in the grapple-
 closing
 Of adverse interests: this, at last,
 is known
 (Thank Pius for the lesson) that
 albeit,
 Among the Popedom's hundred
 heads of stone
 Which blink down on you from the
 roof's retreat
 In Siena's tiger-striped cathedral,
 —Joan
 And Borgia 'mid their fellows you may
 greet.
 A harlot and a devil, you will see
 Not a man, still less angel, grandly set
 With open soul, to render man
 more free.

The fishers are still thinking of the
net,
And if not thinking of the hook too,
we
Are counted somewhat deeply in their
debt :

But that's a rare case—so, by hook
and crook

They take the advantage, agonizing
Christ

By rustier nails than those of
Cedron's brook,

I' the people's body very cheaply
priced ;

Quoting high priesthood out of Holy
Book,

And buying death-fields with the
sacrificed.

XVIII

Priests, priests !—there's no such
name,—God's own, except

Ye take most vainly. Through
Heaven's lifted gate

The priestly ephod in sole glory
swept,

When Christ ascended, entered in, and
sate

With victor face sublimely over-
wept,

At Deity's right hand, to mediate,
He alone, He for ever. On His
breast

The Urim and the Thummim, fed with
fire

From the full Godhead, flicker with
the unrest

Of human, pitiful heartbeats. Come
up higher,

All Christians ! Levi's tribe is dis-
possest !

That solitary alb ye shall admire,
But not cast lots for. The last

chrism, poured right,
Was on that Head, and poured for
burial

And not for domination in men's
sight.

What are these churches ? The old
temple wall

Doth overlook them juggling with
the sleight

Of surplice, candlestick, and altar-
pall.

East church and West church, ay,
North church and South,

B. P.

Rome's church and England's,—let
them all repent,

And make concordats 'twixt their
soul and mouth,

Succeed St. Paul by working at the
tent,

Become infallible guides by speak-
ing truth.

And excommunicate their own pride
that bends

And cramped the ^{is} ~~eyes~~ of men.

Priestcraft ~~is~~ ^{is} ~~out~~ ; the twined
linen blazes,

Not, like asbestos, to grow white
and clear,

But all to perish !—while the fire-
smell raises

To life some swooning spirits who,
last year,

Lost breath and heart in these church-
stified places.

Why, almost, through this Pius, we
believed

The priesthood could be an honest
thing, he smiled

So saintly while our corn was being
sheaved

For his own granaries. Showing now
defiled

His hireling hands, a better help's
achieved

Than if he blessed us shepherd-like
and mild.

False doctrine, strangled by its own
amen,

Dies in the throat of all this nation.
Who

Will speak a pope's name, as they
rise again ?

What woman or what child will count
him true ?

What dreamer praise him with the
voice or pen ?

What man fight for him ?—Pius has
his due.

XIX

Record that gain, Mazzini !—Yes,
but first

Set down thy people's faults :—set
down the want

Of soul-conviction ; set down aims
dispersed,

And incoherent means, and v^lour
scant

Z

Because of scanty faith, and
 schisms occurred
 That wrench these brother-hearts
 from covenant
 With freedom and each other. Set
 down this
 And this, and see to overcome it when
 The seasons bring the fruits thou
 wilt not miss
 If wary. Let no cry of patriot men
 Distract thee from the stern
 analysis
 Of masses who cry on: keep thy
 ken
 Clear as thy soul is virtuous. Heroes'
 blood
 Splashed up against thy noble brow
 in Rome.—
 Let such not blind thee to the inter-
 lude
 Which was not also holy, yet did come
 'Twixt sacramental actions:—
 brotherhood,
 Despised even there,—and something
 of the doom
 Of Remus, in the trenches. Listen
 now—
 Rossi died silent near where Cæsar
 died.
 He did not say, "My Brutus, is it
 thou?"
 Instead, rose Italy and testified,
 "'Twas I, and I am Brutus.—I
 avow."
 At which the whole world's laugh of
 scorn replied,
 "A poor maimed copy of Brutus!"
 Too much like,
 Indeed, to be so unlike. Too un-
 skilled
 At Philippi and the honest battle-
 pike,
 To be so skilful where a man is killed
 Near Pompey's statue, and the
 daggers strike
 At unawares i' the throat. Was thus
 fulfilled
 An omen of great Michel Angelo,—
 When Marcus Brutus he conceived
 complete,
 And strove to hurl him out by blow on
 blow
 Upon the marble, at Art's thunder-
 heat,
 Till haply some pre-shadow rising
 slow

Of what his Italy would fancy meet
 To be called BRUTUS, straight his
 plastic hand
 Fell back before his prophet soul, and
 left
 A fragment . . . a maimed Brutus,
 —but more grand
 Than this, so named of Rome, was!
 Let thy weft
 Be of one woof and warp, Mazzini!
 —stand
 With no man of a spotless fame
 bereft—
 Not for Italia! Neither stand
 apart,
 No, not for the republic!—from those
 pure
 Brave men who hold the level of
 thy heart
 In patriot truth, as lover and as doer,
 Albeit they will not follow where
 thou art
 As extreme theorist. Trust and dis-
 trust fewer;
 And so bind strong and keep un-
 stained the cause
 Which, at God's signal, war-trumps
 newly blown
 Shall yet annuntiate to the world's
 applause.

xx

Just now, the world is busy: it has
 grown
 A Fair-going world. Imperial
 England draws
 The flowing ends of the earth, from
 Fez, Canton,
 Delhi and Stockholm, Athens and
 Madrid,
 The Russias and the vast Americas,
 As a queen gathers in her robes
 amid
 Her golden cincture,—isles, penin-
 sulas,
 Capes, continents, far inland
 countries hid
 By jasper sands and hills of chryso-
 prase,
 All trailing in their splendours
 through the door
 Of the new Crystal Palace. Every
 nation,
 To every other nation, strange of
 yore,
 Shall face to face give civic salutation,

And hold up in a proud right hand
before
That congress, the best work which
she could fashion
By her best means—"These corals,
will you please
To match against your oaks? They
grow as fast
Within my wilderness of purple
seas."

"This diamond stared upon me as I
passed
(As a live god's eye from a marble
frieze)
Along a dark of diamonds. Is it
classed?"

"I wove these stuffs so subtly,
that the gold
Swims to the surface of the silk, like
cream,
And curdles to fair patterns. Ye
behold!"

"These delicate muslins rather seem
Than be, you think? Nay, touch
them and be bold,
Though such veiled Chakhi's face in
Hafiz' dream."

"These carpets—you walk slow on
them like kings,
Inaudible like spirits, while your foot
Dips deep in velvet roses and such
things."

"Even Apollonius might commend
this flute.¹
The music, winding through the
stops, upsprings
To make the player very rich. Com-
pute."

"Here's goblet-glass, to take in
with your wine
The very sun its grapes were ripened
under.

Drink light and juice together, and
each fine."

"This model of a steam-ship moves
your wonder?

You should behold it crushing down
the brine,
Like a blind Jove who feels his way
with thunder."

"Here's sculpture! Ah, *we* live
too! Why not throw
Our life into our marbles? Art has
place

For other artists after Angelo."
"I tried to paint out here a natural
face—

For nature includes Raffael, as we
know,
Not Raffael nature. Will it help my
case?"

"Methinks you will not match this
steel of ours!"

"Nor you this porcelain! One might
think the clay

Retained in it the larvæ of the
flowers,

They bud so, round the cup, the old
spring way."

"Nor you these carven woods,
where birds in bowers,
With twisting snakes and climbing
cupids, play."

XXI

O Magi of the East and of the West,
Your incense, gold, and myrrh are
excellent.—

What gifts for Christ, then, bring
ye with the rest?

Your hands have worked well. Is
your courage spent

In handwork only? Have you
nothing best,

Which generous souls may perfect and
present,

And He shall thank the givers for?
No light

Of teaching, liberal nations, for the
poor,

Who sit in darkness when it is not
night?

No cure for wicked children? Christ,
—no cure!

No help for women sobbing out of
sight

Because men made the laws? No
brothel-lure

Burnt out by popular lightnings?
—Hast thou found

No remedy, my England, for such
woes?

No outlet, Austria, for the scourged
and bound,

No entrance for the exiled? No re-
pose,

¹ Philostratus relates of Apollonius that he objected to the musical instrument of Linus the Rhodian, its incompetence to enrich and beautify. The history of music in our day, would, upon the former point, sufficiently confute the philosopher.

Russia, for knouted Poles worked
underground,
And gentle ladies bleached among the
snows ? —

No mercy for the slave, America ? —
No hope for Rome, free France,
chivalric France ? —

Alas, great nations have great
shames, I say.

No pity, O world, no tender utterance
Of benediction, and prayers
stretched this way

To poor Italia baffled by mischance ? —
O gracious nations, give some ear to
me !

You all go to your Fair, and I am one
Who at the roadside of humanity
Beseech your alms,—a justice to be
done.

So, prosper !

xxii

In the name of Italy,
Meantime, her patriot dead have
benison !

They only have done well ; and
what they did
Being perfect, it shall triumph. Let
them slumber.

No king of Egypt in a pyramid
Is safer from oblivion, though he
number

Full seventy cerements for a cover-
lid.

These Dead be seeds of life, and shall
encumber

The sad heart of the land until it
loose

The clammy clods and let out the
spring-growth

In beatific green through every
bruise.

The tyrant should take heed to what
he doth,

Since every victim-carrion turns
to use,

And drives a chariot, like a god made
wroth,

Against each piled injustice. Ay,
the least

Dead for Italia, not in vain has died,
However vainly, ere life's struggle

ceased,
To mad dissimilar ends they swerved
aside.

Each grave her nationality has
pieced

By its own noble breadth, and forti-
fied,

And pinned it deeper to the soil.
Forlorn

Of thanks, be, therefore, no one of
these graves !

Not hers,—who, at her husband's
side, in scorn,

Outfaced the whistling shot and
hissing waves,

Until she felt her little babe unborn
Recoil, within her, from the violent

staves
And bloodhounds of the world : at
which, her life

Dropt inwards from her eyes, and
followed it

Beyond the hunters. Garibaldi's
wife

And child died so. And now, the sea-
weeds fit

Her body like a proper shroud and
coif,

And murmously the ebbing waters
grit

The little pebbles, while she lies
interred

In the sea-sand. Perhaps, ere dying
thus,

She looked up in his face which
never stirred

From its clenched anguish, as to make
excuse

For leaving him for his, if so she
erred.

Well he remembers that she could not
choose.

A memorable grave ! Another is
At Genoa, where a king may fitly lie,—

Who bursting that heroic heart of
his

At lost Novara, that he could not die,
Though thrice into the cannon's

eyes for this
He plunged his shuddering steed, and
felt the sky

Reel back between the fire-shocks ;
—stripped away

The ancestral ermine ere the smoke
had cleared,

And naked to the soul, that none
might say

His kingship covered what was base
and bleared

With treason, he went out an exile,
yea,

An exiled patriot ! Let him be re-
vered.

XXIII

Yea, verily, Charles Albert has died
well :
And if he lived not all so, as one spoke,
The sin pass softly with the passing
bell.

For he was shriven, I think, in cannon
smoke,
And taking off his crown, made
visible

A hero's forehead. Shaking Austria's
yoke

He shattered his own hand and
heart. " So best,"

His last words were upon his lonely
bed,—

" I do not end like popes and dukes
at least—

Thank God for it." And now that he
is dead,

Admitting it is proved and mani-
fest

That he was worthy, with a discrown-
ed head,

To measure heights with patriots,
let them stand

Beside the man in his Oporto shroud,
And each vouchsafe to take him
by the hand,

And kiss him on the cheek, and say
aloud,

" Thou, too, hast suffered for our
native land !

My brother, thou art one of us. Be
proud."

XXIV

Still, graves, when Italy is talked
upon !

Still, still, the patriot's tomb, the
stranger's hate.

Still Niobe ! still fainting in the sun
By whose most dazzling arrows
violate

Her beauteous offspring perished !
Has she won

Nothing but garlands for the graves,
from Fate ?

Nothing but death-songs ?—Yet,
be it understood,

Life throbs in noble Piedmont !
while the feet

Of Rome's clay image, dabbled
soft in blood,

Grow flat with dissolution, and, as
meet,

Will soon be shovelled off, like other
mud,

To leave the passage free in church
and street.

And I, who first took hope up in
this song,

Because a child was singing one . . .
behold,

The hope and omen were not, haply,
wrong !

Poets are soothsayers still, like those
of old

Who studied flights of doves,—and
creatures young

And tender, mighty meanings, may
unfold.

xxv

The sun strikes, through the win-
dows, up the floor :

Stand out in it, my own young
Florentine,

Not two years old, and let me see
thee more !

It grows along thy amber curls, to
shine

Brighter than elsewhere. Now,
look straight before,

And fix thy brave blue English eyes
on mine,

And from thy soul, which fronts
the future so,

With unabashed and unabated gaze,
Teach me to hope for, what the

Angels know,
When they smile clear as thou dost.

Down God's ways,
With just alighted feet between the

snow
And snowdrops, where a little lamb

may graze,
Thou hast no fear, my lamb, about

the road,
Albeit in our vainglory we assume

That, less than we have, thou hast
learnt of God.

Stand out, my blue-eyed prophet !—
thou, to whom

The earliest world-day light that
ever flowed,

Through Casa Guidi windows, chanced
to come !

Now shake the glittering nimbus of
thy hair,

And be God's witness ;—that the
 elemental
 New springs of life are gushing
 everywhere,
 To cleanse the water courses, and pre-
 vent all
 Concrete obstructions which infest
 the air !
 —That earth's alive, and gentle or
 ungentle
 Motions within her, signify but
 growth :
 The ground swells greenest o'er the
 labouring moles.
 Howe'er the uneasy world is vexed
 and wrath,
 Young children, lifted high on parent
 souls,
 Look round them with a smile upon
 the mouth,
 And take for music every bell that
 tolls.

Who said we should be better if like
 these ?
 And *we* . . . despond we for the
 future, though
 Posterity is smiling at our knees,
 Convicting us of folly ? Let us go—
 We will trust God. The blank
 interstices
 Men take for ruins, He will build into
 With pillared marbles rare, or knit
 across
 With generous arches, till the fane's
 complete.
 This world has no perdition, if some
 loss.

XXVI

Such cheer I gather from thy smiling,
 Sweet !
 The self-same cherub faces which
 emboss
 The rail, lean inward to the mercy-
 seat.

AURORA LEIGH

(1857)

FIRST BOOK

OF writing many books there is no
 end ;
 And I who have written much in
 prose and verse
 For others' uses, will write now for
 mine,—
 Will write my story for my better self,
 As when you paint your portrait for a
 friend,
 Who keeps it in a drawer and looks
 at it
 Long after he has ceased to love you,
 just
 To hold together what he was and is.
 I, writing thus, am still what men call
 young ;
 I have not so far left the coasts of life
 To travel inland, that I cannot hear
 That murmur of the outer Infinite
 Which unweaned babies smile at in
 their sleep
 When wondered at for smiling ; not so
 far,
 But still I catch my mother at her
 post

Beside the nursery-door, with finger
 up,
 " Hush, hush—here's too much
 noise ! " while her sweet eyes
 Leap forward, taking part against her
 word
 In the child's riot. Still I sit and feel
 My father's slow hand, when she had
 left us both,
 Stroke out my childish curls across his
 knee ;
 And hear Assunta's daily jest (she
 knew
 He liked it better than a better jest)
 Inquire how many golden scudi went
 To make such ringlets. O my father's
 hand,
 Stroke the poor hair down, stroke it
 heavily,—
 Draw, press the child's head closer to
 thy knee !
 I'm still too young, too young, to sit
 alone.

I write. My mother was a Florentine,
 Whose rare blue eyes were shut from
 seeing me

When scarcely I was four years old ;
 my life,
 A poor spark snatched up from a fail-
 ing lamp
 Which went out therefore. She was
 weak and frail ;
 She could not bear the joy of giving
 life—
 The mother's rapture slew her. If her
 kiss
 Had left a longer weight upon my lips,
 It might have steadied the uneasy
 breath,
 And reconciled and fraternised my
 soul
 With the new order. As it was, indeed,
 I felt a mother-want about the world,
 And still went seeking, like a bleating
 lamb
 Left out at night, in shutting up the
 fold,—
 As restless as a nest-deserted bird
 Grown chill through something being
 away, though what
 It knows not. I, Aurora Leigh, was
 born
 To make my father sadder, and myself
 Not overjoyous, truly. Women know
 The way to rear up children (to be
 just),
 They know a simple, merry, tender
 knack
 Of tying sashes, fitting baby-shoes,
 And stringing pretty words that make
 no sense,
 And kissing full sense into empty
 words ;
 Which things are corals to cut life
 upon,
 Although such trifles : children learn
 by such,
 Love's holy earnest in a pretty play,
 And get not over-early solemnised,—
 But seeing, as in a rose-bush, Love's
 Divine,
 Which burns and hurts not,—not a
 single bloom,—
 Become aware and unafraid of Love.
 Such good do mothers. Fathers love
 as well
 —Mine did, I know,—but still with
 heavier brains,
 And wills more consciously respons-
 ible,
 And not as wisely, since less foolish-
 ly ;

So mothers have God's licence to be
 missed.

My father was an austere Englishman,
 Who, after a dry life-time spent at
 home
 In college-learning, law, and parish
 talk,
 Was flooded with a passion unaware,
 His whole provisioned and complacent
 past
 Drowned out from him that moment.
 As he stood
 In Florence, where he had come to
 spend a month
 And note the secret of Da Vinci's
 drains,
 He musing somewhat absently perhaps
 Some English question . . . whether
 men should pay
 The unpopular but necessary tax
 With left or right hand—in the alien
 sun
 In that great square of the Santissima,
 There drifted past him (scarcely
 marked enough
 To move his comfortable island-
 scorn),
 A train of priestly banners, cross and
 psalm,—
 The white-veiled rose-crowned maidens
 holding up
 Tall tapers, weighty for such wrists,
 aslant
 To the blue luminous tremor of the air,
 And letting drop the white wax as
 they went
 To eat the bishop's wafer at the
 church ;
 From which long trail of chanting
 priests and girls,
 A face flashed like a cymbal on his
 face,
 And shook with silent clangour brain
 and heart,
 Transfiguring him to music. Thus,
 even thus,
 He too received his sacramental gift
 With eucharistic meanings ; for he
 loved.
 And thus beloved, she died. I've
 heard it said
 That but to see him in the first sur-
 prise
 Of widower and father, nursing me,

Unmothered little child of four years
 old,
 His large man's hands afraid to touch
 my curls,
 As if the gold would tarnish,—his
 grave lips
 Contriving such a miserable smile,
 As if he knew needs must, or I should
 die,
 And yet 'twas hard,—would almost
 make the stones
 Cry out for pity. There's a verse he
 set
 In Santa Croce to her memory,
 "Weep for an infant too young to
 weep much
 When death removed this mother"—
 stops the mirth
 To-day, on women's faces when they
 walk
 With rosy children hanging on their
 gowns,
 Under the cloister, to escape the sun
 That scorches in the piazza. After
 which,
 He left our Florence, and made haste
 to hide
 Himself, his prattling child, and
 silent grief,
 Among the mountains above Pelago;
 Because unmothered babes, he
 thought, had need
 Of mother nature more than others
 use,
 And Pan's white goats, with udders
 warm and full
 Of mystic contemplations, come to
 feed
 Poor milkless lips of orphans like his
 own—
 Such scholar-scrapes he talked, I've
 heard from friends,
 For even prosaic men, who wear grief
 long,
 Will get to wear it as a hat aside
 With a flower stuck in't. Father,
 then, and child,
 We lived among the mountains many
 years,
 God's silence on the outside of the
 house,
 And we, who did not speak too loud,
 within;
 And old Assunta to make up the fire,
 Crossing herself whene'er a sudden
 flame

Which lightened from the firewood,
 made alive
 That picture of my mother on the
 wall.
 The painter drew it after she was dead;
 And when the face was finished, throat
 and hands,
 Her cameriera carried him, in hate
 Of the English-fashioned shroud, the
 last brocade
 She dressed in at the Pitti. "He
 should paint
 No sadder thing than that," she swore,
 "to wrong
 Her poor signora." Therefore very
 strange
 The effect was. I, a little child,
 would crouch
 For hours upon the floor, with knees
 drawn up,
 And gaze across them, half in terror,
 half
 In adoration, at the picture there,—
 That swan-like supernatural white
 life,
 Just sailing upward from the red stiff
 silk
 Which seemed to have no part in it,
 nor power
 To keep it from quite breaking out of
 bounds:
 For hours I sate and stared. Assunta's
 awe
 And my poor father's melancholy eyes
 Still pointed that way. That way,
 went my thoughts
 When wandering beyond sight. And
 as I grew
 In years, I mixed, confused, uncon-
 sciously,
 Whatever I last read or heard or
 dreamed,
 Abhorrent, admirable, beautiful,
 Pathetical, or ghastly, or grotesque,
 With still that face . . . which did
 not therefore change,
 But kept the mystic level of all forms
 And fears and admirations; was by
 turns
 Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch,
 and sprite,—
 A dauntless Muse who eyes a dread-
 ful Fate,
 A loving Psyche who loses sight of
 Love,
 A still Medusa, with mild milky brows

All curdled and all clothed upon with
 snakes
 Whose slime falls fast as sweat will ;
 or, anon,
 Our Lady of the Passion, stabbed
 with swords
 Where the Babe sucked ; or, Lamia in
 her first
 Moonlighted pallor, ere she shrunk
 and blinked,
 And, shuddering, wriggled down to
 the unclean ;
 Or, my own mother, leaving her last
 smile
 In her last kiss, upon the baby-mouth
 My father pushed down on the bed for
 that,—
 Or my dead mother, without smile or
 kiss,
 Buried at Florence. All which images,
 Concentred on the picture, glassed
 themselves
 Before my meditative childhood ... as
 The incoherences of change and death
 Are represented fully, mixed and
 merged,
 In the smooth fair mystery of per-
 petual Life.

 And while I stared away my childish
 wits
 Upon my mother's picture (ah, poor
 child !)
 My father, who through love had
 suddenly
 Thrown off the old conventions,
 broken loose
 From chin-bands of the soul, like
 Lazarus,
 Yet had no time to learn to talk and
 walk
 Or grow anew familiar with the sun,—
 Who had reached to freedom, not to
 action, lived,
 But lived as one entranced, with
 thoughts, not aims,—
 Whom love had unmade from a com-
 mon man
 But not completed to an uncommon
 man,—
 My father taught me what he had
 learnt the best
 Before he died and left me,—grief and
 love.
 And, seeing we had books among the
 hills,

Strong words of counselling souls,
 confederate
 With vocal pines and waters,—out of
 books
 He taught me all the ignorance of men,
 And how God laughs in heaven when
 any man
 Says, " Here I'm learned ; this, I
 understand ;
 In that, I am never caught at fault or
 doubt."
 He sent the schools to school demon-
 strating
 A fool will pass for such through one
 mistake,
 While a philosopher will pass for such,
 Through said mistakes being ventured
 in the gross
 And heaped up to a system.

 I am like,
 They tell me, my dear father. Broader
 brows
 Howbeit, upon a slenderer under-
 growth
 Of delicate features,—paler, near as
 grave ;
 But then my mother's smile breaks up
 the whole,
 And makes it better sometimes than
 itself.

 So, nine full years, our days were hid
 with God
 Among His mountains. I was just
 thirteen,
 Still growing like the plants from un-
 seen roots
 In tongue-tied Springs,—and sud-
 denly awoke
 To full life and its needs and agonies,
 With an intense, strong, struggling
 heart beside
 A stone-dead father. Life, struck
 sharp on death,
 Makes awful lightning. His last
 word was, " Love—"
 " Love, my child, love, love ! "—(then
 he had done with grief)
 " Love, my child." Ere I answered
 he was gone,
 And none was left to love in all the
 world.

 There, ended childhood : what suc-
 ceeded next
 I recollect as, after fevers, men

Thread back the passage of delirium,
Missing the turn still, baffled by the
door;

Smooth endless days, notched here
and there with knives;

A weary, wormy darkness, spurred i'
the flank

With flame, that it should eat and end
itself

Like some tormented scorpion. Then,
at last,

I do remember clearly, how there
came

A stranger with authority, not right
(I thought not), who commanded,
caught me up

From old Assunta's neck; how, with a
shriek,

She let me go,—while I, with ears too
full

Of my father's silence, to shriek back
a word,

In all a child's astonishment at
grief

Stared at the wharfage where she
stood and moaned,

My poor Assunta, where she stood and
moaned!

The white walls, the blue hills, my
Italy,

Drawn backward from the shuddering
steamer-deck,

Like one in anger drawing back her
skirts

Which suppliants catch at. Then the
bitter sea

Inexorably pushed between us both,
And sweeping up the ship with my
despair

Threw us out as a pasture to the stars:

Ten nights and days we voyaged on
the deep;

Ten nights and days, without the com-
mon face

Of any day or night; the moon and
sun

Cut off from the green reconciling
earth,

To starve into a blind ferocity
And glare unnatural; the very sky
(Dropping its bell-net down upon the
sea

As if no human heart should scape
alive),

Bedraggled with the desolating salt,

Until it seemed no more that holy
heaven

To which my father went. All new,
and strange—

The universe turned stranger, for a
child.

Then, land!—then, England! oh, the
frosty cliffs

Looked cold upon me. Could I find a
home

Among those mean red houses through
the fog?

And when I heard my father's lan-
guage first

From alien lips which had no kiss for
mine,

I wept aloud, then laughed, then
wept, then wept,—

And some one near me said the child
was mad

Through much sea-sickness. The
train swept us on.

Was this my father's England? the
great Isle?

The ground seemed cut up from the
fellowship

Of verdure, field from field, as man
from man;

The skies themselves looked low and
positive,

As almost you could touch them with
a hand

And dared to do it, they were so far off
From God's celestial crystals; all

things, blurred

And dull and vague. Did Shake-
speare and his mates

Absorb the light here?—not a hill or
stone

With heart to strike a radiant colour
up

Or active outline on the indifferent
air!

I think I see my father's sister stand
Upon the hall-step of her country-
house

To give me welcome. She stood
straight and calm,

Her somewhat narrow forehead
braided tight

As if for taming accidental thoughts
From possible pulses; brown hair

pricked with grey

By frigid use of life (she was not old,

Although my father's elder by a year),
 A nose drawn sharply, yet in delicate
 lines ;
 A close mild mouth, a little soured
 about
 The ends, through speaking unre-
 quited loves,
 Or peradventure niggardly half-
 truths ;
 Eyes of no colour,—once they might
 have smiled,
 But never, never have forgot them
 selves
 In smiling ; cheeks, in which was yet
 a rose
 Of perished summers, like a rose in a
 book,
 Kept more for ruth than pleasure,—if
 past bloom,
 Past fading also.
 She had lived, we'll say,
 A harmless life, she called a virtuous
 life,
 A quiet life, which was not life at all
 (But that, she had not lived enough to
 know),
 Between the vicar and the county
 squires,
 The lord-lieutenant looking down
 sometimes
 From the empyreal, to assure their
 souls
 Against chance-vulgarisms, and, in
 the abyss,
 The apothecary looked on once a year,
 To prove their soundness of humility.
 The poor-club exercised her Christian
 gifts
 Of knitting stockings, stitching petti-
 coats,
 Because we are of one flesh after all
 And need one flannel (with a proper
 sense
 Of difference in the quality)—and still
 The book-club, guarded from your
 modern trick
 Of shaking dangerous questions from
 the crease,
 Preserved her intellectual. She had
 lived
 A sort of cage-bird life, born in a cage,
 Accounting that to leap from perch to
 perch
 Was act and joy enough for any bird.
 Dear heaven, how silly are the things
 that live

In thickets and eat berries !

 I, alas,
 A wild bird scarcely fledged, was
 brought to her cage,
 And she was there to meet me. Very
 kind.
 Bring the clean water ; give out the
 fresh seed.

She stood upon the steps to welcome
 me,
 Calm, in black garb. I clung about
 her neck,—
 Young babes, who catch at every
 shred of wool
 To draw the new light closer, catch
 and cling
 Less blindly. In my ears, my father's
 word
 Hummed ignorantly, as the sea in
 shells,
 " Love, love, my child." She, black
 there with my grief,
 Might feel my love—she was his sister
 once—
 I clung to her. A moment, she
 seemed moved,
 Kissed me with cold lips, suffered me
 to cling,
 And drew me feebly through the hall,
 into
 The room she sate in.
 There with some strange spasm
 Of pain and passion, she wrung loose
 my hands
 Imperiously, and held me at arm's
 length,
 And with two grey-steel naked-bladed
 eyes
 Searched through my face,—ay,
 stabbed it through and through,
 Through brows and cheeks and chin,
 as if to find
 A wicked murderer in my innocent face,
 If not here, there perhaps. Then,
 drawing breath,
 She struggled for her ordinary calm,
 And missed it rather,—told me not to
 shrink,
 As if she had told me not to lie or
 swear,—
 " She loved my father, and would love
 me too
 As long as I deserved it." Very kind.
 I understood her meaning afterward ;

She thought to find my mother in my
 face,
 And questioned it for that. For she,
 my aunt,
 Had loved my father truly, as she
 could,
 And hated, with the gall of gentle
 souls,
 My Tuscan mother, who had fooled
 away
 A wise man from wise courses, a good
 man
 From obvious duties, and, depriving
 her,
 His sister, of the household pre-
 cedence,
 Had wronged his tenants, robbed his
 native land,
 And made him mad, alike by life and
 death,
 In love and sorrow. She had pored for
 years
 What sort of woman could be suitable
 To her sort of hate, to entertain it
 with;
 And so, her very curiosity
 Became hate too, and all the idealism
 She ever used in life, was used for
 hate,
 Till hate, so nourished, did exceed at
 last
 The love from which it grew, in
 strength and heat,
 And wrinkled her smooth conscience
 with a sense
 Of disputable virtue (say not, sin)
 When Christian doctrine was enforced
 at church.

And thus my father's sister was to me
 My mother's hater. From that day,
 she did
 Her duty to me (I appreciate it
 In her own word as spoken to herself),
 Her duty, in large measure, well-
 pressed out,
 But measured always. She was gener-
 ous, bland,
 More courteous than was tender, gave
 me still
 The first place,—as if fearful that
 God's saints
 Would look down suddenly and say,
 "Herein
 You missed a point, I think, through
 lack of love."

Alas, a mother never is afraid
 Of speaking angrily to any child,
 Since love, she knows, is justified of
 love.

And I, I was a good child on the whole,
 A meek and manageable child. Why
 not?

I did not live, to have the faults of life:
 There seemed more true life in my
 father's grave

Than in all England. Since *that*
 threw me off

Who fain would cleave (his latest will,
 they say,

Consigned me to his land), I only
 thought

Of lying quiet there where I was
 thrown

Like sea-weed on the rocks, and suffer
 her

To prick me to a pattern with her pin,
 Fibre from fibre, delicate leaf from
 leaf,

And dry out from my drowned
 anatomy

The last sea-salt left in me.

So it was.

I broke the copious curls upon my
 head

In braids, because she liked smooth-
 ordered hair.

I left off saying my sweet Tuscan
 words

Which still at any stirring of the heart
 Came up to float across the English
 phrase,

As lilies (*Bene . . . or che ch'è*), be-
 cause

She liked my father's child to speak
 his tongue.

I learnt the collects and the cate-
 chism,

The creeds, from Athanasius back to
 Nice,

The Articles . . . the Tracts *against*
 the times

(By no means Buonaventure's "Prick
 of Love"),

And various popular synopses of
 Inhuman doctrines never taught by
 John,

Because she liked instructed piety.

I learnt my complement of classic
 French

(Kept pure of Balzac and neologism),

And German also, since she liked a
range
Of liberal education,—tongues, not
books.
I learnt a little algebra, a little
Of the mathematics,—brushed with
extreme flounce
The circle of the sciences, because
She misliked women who are frivolous.
I learnt the royal genealogies
Of Oviedo, the internal laws
Of the Burmese empire, . . . by how
many feet .
Mount Chimborazo outsoars Him-
meh,eh,
What navigable river joins itself
To Lara, and what census of the year
five
Was taken at Klagenfurt,—because
she liked
A general insight into useful facts.
I learnt much music,—such as would
have been
As quite impossible in Johnson's day
As still it might be wished—fine
sleights of hand
And unimagined fingering, shuffling
off
The hearer's soul through hurricanes
of notes
To a noisy Tophet ; and I drew . . .
costumes
From French engravings, nereids
neatly draped,
With smirks of simmering godship,—
I washed in
From nature, landscapes (rather say,
washed out).
I danced the polka and Cellarius,
Spunglass, stuffed birds, and modelled
flowers in wax,
Because she liked accomplishments in
girls.
I read a score of books on womanhood
To prove, if women do not think at all,
They may teach thinking (to a
maiden-aunt
Or else the author)—books demon-
strating
Their right of comprehending hus-
band's talk
When not too deep, and even of an-
swering
With pretty “ may it please you,” or
“ so it is,”—
Their rapid insight and fine aptitude,

Particular worth and general mission-
ariness,
As long as they keep quiet by the fire
And never say “ no ” when the world
says “ ay,”
For that is fatal,—their angelic reach
Of virtue, chiefly used to sit and darn,
And fatten household sinners,—their,
in brief,
Potential faculty in everything
Of abdicating power in it : she owned
She liked a woman to be womanly,
And English women, she thanked God
and sighed
(Some people always sigh in thanking
God),
Were models to the universe. And
last
I learnt cross-stitch, because she did
not like
To see me wear the night with empty
hands,
A-doing nothing. So, my shepherdess
Was something after all (the pastoral
saints
Be praised for't), leaning lovelorn
with pink eyes
To match her shoes, when I mistook
the silks ;
Her head uncrushed by that round
weight of hat
So strangely similar to the tortoise-
shell
Which slew the tragic poet.

By the way,
The works of women are symbolical.
We sew, sew, prick our fingers, dull
our sight,
Producing what ? A pair of slippers,
sir,
To put on when you're weary—or a
stool
To stumble over and vex you . . .
“ curse that stool ! ”
Or else at best, a cushion, where you
lean
And sleep, and dream of something we
are not,
But would be for your sake. Alas,
alas !
This hurts most, this . . . that, after
all, we are paid
The worth of our work, perhaps.
In looking down
Those years of education (to return),
I wonder if Brinvilliers suffered more

In the water-torture, . . . flood succeeding flood
 To drench the incapable throat and split the veins . . .
 Than I did. Certain of your feeble souls
 Go out in such a process ; my pine To a sick, inodorous light ; my own endured :
 I had relations in the Unseen, and drew
 The elemental nutriment and heat From nature, as earth feels the sun at nights,
 Or as a babe sucks surely in the dark.
 I kept the life, thrust on me, on the outside
 Of the inner life, with all its ample room
 For heart and lungs, for will and intellect,
 Inviolable by conventions. God, I thank Thee for that grace of Thine !
 At first,
 I felt no life which was not patience,—did
 The thing she bade me, without heed to a thing
 Beyond it, sate in just the chair she placed,
 With back against the window, to exclude
 The sight of the great lime-tree on the lawn,
 Which seemed to have come on purpose from the woods
 To bring the house a message,—ay, and walked
 Demurely in her carpeted low rooms, As if I should not, hearkening my own steps,
 Misdoubt I was alive. I read her books,
 Was civil to her cousin, Romney Leigh,
 Give ear to her vicar, tea to her visitors,
 And heard them whisper, when I changed a cup
 (I blushed for joy at that)—“ The Italian child,
 For all her blue eyes and her quiet ways,
 Thrives ill in England : she is paler yet

Than when we came the last time ; she will die.”

“ Will die.” My cousin, Romney Leigh, blushed too,
 With sudden anger, and approaching me
 Said low between his teeth—“ You’re wicked now ?
 You wish to die and leave the world a-dusk
 For others, with your naughty light blown out ? ”
 I looked into his face defyingly. He might have known, that, being what I was,
 ’Twas natural to like to get away As far as dead folk can ; and then indeed
 Some people make no trouble when they die.
 He turned and went abruptly, slammed the door
 And shut his dog out.

Romney, Romney Leigh.
 I have not named my cousin hitherto, And yet I used him as a sort of friend ; My elder by few years, but cold and shy
 And absent . . . tender, when he thought of it,
 Which scarcely was imperative, grave betimes,
 As well as early master of Leigh Hall, Whereof the nightmaresate upon his youth
 Repressing all its seasonable delights, And agonising with a ghastly sense Of universal hideous want and wrong To incriminate possession. When he came
 From college to the country, very oft He crossed the hills on visits to my aunt,
 With gifts of blue grapes from the hot-houses,
 A book in one hand,—mere statistics (if
 I chanced to lift the cover), count of all
 The goats whose beards are sprouting down toward hell,
 Against God’s separating judgment-hour.
 And she, she almost loved him,—even allowed

That sometimes he should seem to
 sigh my way ;
 It made him easier to be pitiful,
 And sighing was his gift. So, undis-
 turbed
 At whiles she let him shut my music
 up
 And push my needles down, and lead
 me out
 To see in that south angle of the house
 The figs grow black as if by a Tuscan
 rock,
 On some light pretext. She would
 turn her head

At other moments, go to fetch a thing,
 And leave me breath enough to speak
 with him,
 For his sake ; it was simple.

Sometimes too
 He would have saved me utterly, it
 seemed,
 He stood and looked so.

Once, he stood so near
 He dropped a sudden hand upon my
 head
 Bent down on woman's work, as soft
 as rain—
 But then I rose and shook it off as
 fire,
 The stranger's touch that took my
 father's place,
 Yet dared seem soft.

I used him for a friend
 Before I ever knew him for a friend.
 'Twas better, 'twas worse also, after-
 ward :

We came so close, we saw our differ-
 ences
 Too intimately. Always Romney
 Leigh
 Was looking for the worms, I for the
 gods.

A godlike nature his ; the gods look
 down,
 Incurious of themselves ; and cer-
 tainly

'Tis well I should remember, how,
 those days,
 I was a worm too, and he looked on
 me.

A little by his act perhaps, yet more
 By something in me, surely not my
 will,
 I did not die. But slowly, as one in
 swoon,

To whom life creeps back in the form
 of death,
 With a sense of separation, a blind
 pain
 Of blank obstruction, and a roar i' the
 ears
 Of visionary chariots which retreat
 As earth grows clearer . . . slowly,
 by degrees,
 I woke, rose up . . . where was I ? in
 the world ;
 For uses, therefore, I must count
 worth while.

I had a little chamber in the house,
 As green as any privet-hedge a bird
 Might choose to build in, though the
 nest itself

Could show but dead-brown sticks and
 straws ; the walls
 Were green, the carpet was pure green,
 the straight

Small bed was curtained greenly, and
 the folds

Hung green about the window, which
 let in

The out-door world with all its green-
 ery.

You could not push your head out
 and escape

A dash of dawn-dew from the honey-
 suckle,

But so you were baptized into the
 grace

And privilege of seeing. . . .
 First, the lime
 (I had enough, there, of the lime, be
 sure,—

My morning-dream was often hummed
 away

By the bees in it) ; past the lime, the
 lawn,

Which, after sweeping broadly round
 the house,

Went trickling through the shrub-
 berries in a stream

Of tender turf, and wore and lost
 itself

Among the acacias, over which, you
 saw

The irregular line of elms by the deep
 lane

Which stopped the grounds and
 dammed the overflow

Of arbutus and laurel. Out of
 sight

The lane was; sunk so deep, no
foreign tramp
Nor drover of wild ponies out of Wales
Could guess if lady's hall or tenant's
lodge
Dispensed such odours,—though his
stick well-crook'd
Might reach the lowest trail of blos-
soming briar
Which dipped upon the wall. Behind
the elms,
And through their tops, you saw the
folded hills
Striped up and down with hedges
(burly oaks
Projecting from the lines to show
themselves),
Through which my cousin Romney's
chimneys smoked
As still as when a silent mouth in frost
Breathes—showing where the wood-
lands hid Leigh Hall;
While, far above, a jut of table-land,
A promontory without water,
stretched,—
You could not catch it if the days
were thick,
Or took it for a cloud; but, otherwise
The vigorous sun would catch it up at
eve
And use it for an anvil till he had filled
The shelves of heaven with burning
thunderbolts,
And proved he need not rest so early:
—then,
When all his setting trouble was re-
solved
To a trance of passive glory, you
might see
In apparition on the golden sky
(Alas, my Giotto's background!) the
sheep run
Along the fine clear outline, small as
mice
That run along a witch's scarlet
thread.

Not a grand nature. Not my chestnut-
woods
Of Vallombrosa, cleaving by the
spurs
To the precipices. Not my headlong
leaps
Of waters, that cry out for joy or fear
In leaping through the palpitating
pines,

Like a white soul tossed out to eternity
With thrills of time upon it. Not
indeed
My multitudinous mountains, sitting
in
The magic circle, with the mutual
touch
Electric, panting from their full deep
hearts
Beneath the influent heavens, and
waiting for
Communion and commission. Italy
Is one thing, England one.
On English ground
You understand the letter . . . ere
the fall,
How Adam lived in a garden. All the
fields
Are tied up fast with hedges, nosegay-
like;
The hills are crumpled plains,—the
plains, parterres,—
The trees, round, woolly, ready to be
clipped;
And if you seek for any wilderness
You find, at best, a park. A nature
tamed
And grown domestic like a barn-door
fowl,
Which does not awe you with its claws
and beak,
Nor tempt you to an eyrie too high up,
But which, in cackling, sets you think-
ing of
Your eggs to-morrow at breakfast, in
the pause
Of finer meditation.

Rather say,
A sweet familiar nature, stealing in
As a dog might, or child, to touch your
hand
Or pluck your gown, and humbly
mind you so
Of presence and affection, excellent
For inner uses, from the things with-
out.

I could not be unthankful, I who was
Entreated thus and holpen. In the
room
I speak of, ere the house was well
awake,
And also after it was well asleep,
I sate alone, and drew the blessing in
Of all that nature. With a gradual
step.

Astir among the leaves, a breath, a ray,
It came in softly, while the angels
made

A place for it beside me. The moon
came,

And swept my chamber clean of foolish
thoughts.

The sun came, saying, " Shall I lift
this light

Against the lime-tree, and you will
not look ?

I make the birds sing—listen ! . . .
but, for you,

God never hears your voice, except-
ing when

You lie upon the bed at nights and
weep."

Then, something moved me. Then, I
wakened up

More slowly than I verily write now,
But wholly, at last, I wakened, opened
wide

The window and my soul, and let the
airs

And out-door sights sweep gradual
gospels in,

Regenerating what I was. O Life,
How oft we throw it off and think,—

" Enough,
Enough of life in so much !—here's a
cause

For rupture ;—herein we must break
with Life,

Or be ourselves unworthy ; here we
are wronged,

Maimed, spoiled for aspiration : fare-
well Life ! "

—And so, as froward babes, we hide
our eyes

And think all ended.—Then, Life calls
to us

In some transformed, apocryphal,
new voice,

Above us, or below us, or around . . .
Perhaps we name it Nature's voice, or

Love's,

Tricking ourselves, because we are
more ashamed

To own our compensations than our
griefs :

Still, Life's voice !—still, we make our
peace with Life.

And I, so young then, was not sullen.
Soon

I used to get up early, just to sit
And watch the morning quicken in
the grey,

And hear the silence open like a
flower,

Leaf after leaf,—and stroke with list-
less hand

The woodbine through the window,
till at last

I came to do it with a sort of love,
At foolish unaware : whereat I

smiled,—
A melancholy smile, to catch myself

Smiling for joy.

Capacity for joy
Admits temptation. It seemed, next,

worth while
To dodge the sharp sword set against
my life ;

To slip down stairs through all the
sleepy house,

As mute as any dream there, and
escape

As a soul from the body, out of
doors,—

Glide through the shrubberies, drop
into the lane,

And wander on the hills an hour or
two,

Then back again before the house
should stir.

Or else I sate on in my chamber
green,

And lived my life, and thought my
thoughts, and prayed

My prayers without the vicar ; read
my books,

Without considering whether they
were fit

To do me good. Mark, there. We get
no good

By being ungenerous, even to a
book,

And calculating profits . . . so much
help

By so much reading. It is rather
when

We gloriously forget ourselves, and
plunge

Soul-forward, headlong, into a book's
profound,

Impassioned for its beauty and salt of
truth—

'Tis then we get the right good from a
book.

I read much. What my father taught
 before
 From many a volume, Love re-emphasised
 Upon the self-same pages: Theophrast
 Grew tender with the memory of his eyes,
 And Ælian made mine wet. The trick of Greek
 And Latin, he had taught me, as he would
 Have taught me wrestling or the game of fives
 If such he had known,—most like a shipwrecked man
 Who heaps his single platter with goats' cheese
 And scarlet berries; or like any man
 Who loves but one, and so gives all at once,
 Because he has it, rather than because
 He counts it worthy. Thus, my father gave;
 And thus, as did the women formerly
 By young Achilles, when they pinned the veil
 Across the boy's audacious front, and swept
 With tuneful laughs the silver-fretted rocks,
 He wrapt his little daughter in his large
 Man's doublet, careless did it fit or no.

But, after I had read for memory,
 I read for hope. The path my father's foot
 Had trod me out, which suddenly broke off
 (What time he dropped the wallet of the flesh
 And passed), alone I carried on, and set
 My child-heart 'gainst the thorny underwood,
 To reach the grassy shelter of the trees.
 Ah, babe in the wood, without a brother-babe!
 My own self-pity, like the redbreast bird,
 Flies back to cover all that past with leaves.

Sublimest danger, over which none weeps,

When any young wayfaring soul goes forth
 Alone, unconscious of the perilous road,
 The day-sun dazzling in his limpid eyes,
 To thrust his own way, he an alien, through
 The world of books! Ah, you!—you think it fine,
 You clap hands—"A fair day!"—you cheer him on,
 As if the worst could happen were to rest
 Too long beside a fountain. Yet, behold,
 Behold!—the world of books is still the world;
 And worldlings in it are less merciful
 And more puissant. For the wicked there
 Are winged like angels. Every knife that strikes,
 Is edged from elemental fire to assail
 A spiritual life. The beautiful seems right
 By force of beauty, and the feeble wrong
 Because of weakness. Power is justified,
 Though armed against St. Michael. Many a crown
 Covers bald foreheads. In the book-world, true,
 There's no lack, neither, of God's saints and kings,
 That shake the ashes of the grave aside
 From their calm locks, and undiscomfited
 Look steadfast truths against Time's changing mask.
 True, many a prophet teaches in the roads;
 True, many a seer pulls down the flaming heavens
 Upon his own head in strong martyrdom,
 In order to light men a moment's space.
 But stay!—who judges?—who distinguishes
 'Twixt Saul and Nahash justly, at first sight,
 And leaves king Saul precisely at the sin,

To serve king David ? who discerns at
once

The sound of the trumpets, when the
trumpets blow

For Alaric as well as Charlemagne ?
Who judges prophets, and can tell
true seers

From conjurers ? The child, there ?
Would you leave

That child to wander in a battle-field
And push his innocent smile against
the guns ?

Or even in the catacombs, . . . his
torch

Grown ragged in the fluttering air,
and all

The dark a-mutter round him ? not a
child !

I read books bad and good—some
bad and good

At once : good aims not always make
good books :

Well-tempered spades turn up ill-
smelling soils

In digging vineyards, even : books,
that prove

God's being so definitely, that man's
doubt

Grows self-defined the other side the
line,

Made atheist by suggestion ; moral
books,

Exasperating to license ; genial
books,

Discounting from the human dignity ;
And merry books, which set you weep-
ing when

The sun shines,—ay, and melancholy
books,

Which make you laugh that anyone
should weep

In this disjointed life, for one wrong
more.

The world of books is still the world, I
write,

And both worlds have God's provi-
dence, thank God,

To keep and hearten : with some
struggle, indeed,

Among the breakers, some hard swim-
ming through

The deeps—I lost breath in my soul
sometimes,

And cried, " God save me if there's
any God,"

But, even so, God saved me ; and,
being dashed

From error on to error, every turn
Still brought me nearer to the central
truth.

I thought so. All this anguish in the
thick

Of men's opinions . . . press and
counterpress,

Now up, now down, now underfoot,
and now

Emergent . . . all the best of it,
perhaps,

But throws you back upon a noble
trust

And use of your own instinct,—
merely proves

Pure reason stronger than bare infer-
ence

At strongest. Try it,—fix against
heaven's wall

The scaling ladders of school logic—
mount

Step by step !—Sight goes faster ;
that still ray

Which strikes out from you, how, you
cannot tell,

And why, you know not (did you
eliminate,

That such as you, indeed, should
analyse ?)

Goes straight and fast as light, and
high as God.

The cygnet finds the water ; but the
man

Is born in ignorance of his element,
And feels out blind at first, disorgan-
ised

By sin i' the blood,—his spirit-insight
dulled

And crossed by his sensations. Pre-
sently

We feel it quicken in the dark some-
times ;

Then, mark, be reverent, be obe-
dient,—

For those dumb motions of imperfect
life

Are oracles of vital Deity

Attesting the Hereafter. Let who
says

" The soul's a clean white paper,"
rather say,

A palimpsest, a prophet's holograph

Defiled, erased and covered by a
monk's,—

The Apocalypse, by a Longus! por-
ing on

Which obscene text, we may discern
perhaps

Some fair, fine trace of what was
written once,

Some upstroke of an alpha and omega
Expressing the old scripture.

Books, books, books!

I had found the secret of a garret-
room

Piled high with cases in my father's
name;

Piled high, packed large,—where,
creeping in and out

Among the giant fossils of my past,
Like some small nimble mouse be-
tween the ribs

Of a mastodon, I nibbled here and
there

At this or that box, pulling through
the gap,

In heats of terror, haste, victorious
joy.

The first book first. And how I felt it
beat

Under my pillow, in the morning's
dark,

An hour before the sun would let me
read!

My books!

At last, because the time was ripe,
I chanced upon the poets.

As the earth
Plunges in fury, when the internal
fires

Have reached and pricked her heart,
and, throwing flat

The marts and temples, the triumphal
gates

And towers of observation, clears
herself

To elemental freedom—thus, my
soul,

At poetry's divine first finger-touch,
Let go conventions and sprang up
surprised,

Convicted of the great eternities
Before two worlds.

What's this, Aurora Leigh,
You write so of the poets, and not
laugh?

Those virtuous liars, dreamers after
dark,

Exaggerators of the sun and moon,
And soothsayers in a tea-cup?

I write so

Of the only truth-tellers, now left to
God,—

The only speakers of essential truth,
Opposed to relative, comparative,
And temporal truths; the only holders
by

His sun-skirts, through conventional
grey glooms;

The only teachers who instruct man-
kind,

From just a shadow on a charnel-wall,
To find man's veritable stature out,
Erect, sublime,—the measure of a
man,

And that's the measure of an angel,
says

The apostle. Ay, and while your
common men

Build pyramids, gauge railroads,
reign, reap, dine,

And dust the flaunty carpets of the
world

For kings to walk on, or our senators,
The poet suddenly will catch them up

With his voice like a thunder . . .
"This is soul,

This is life, this word is being said in
heaven,

Here's God down on us! what are you
about?"

How all those workers start amid
their work,

Look round, look up, and feel, a
moment's space,

That carpet-dusting, though a pretty
trade,

Is not the imperative labour after all.

My own best poets, am I one with you,
That thus I love you,—or but one
through love?

Does all this smell of thyme about my
feet

Conclude my visit to your holy hill
In personal presence, or but testify
The rustling of your vesture through
my dreams

With influent odours? When my joy
and pain,

My thought and aspiration, like the
stops

Of pipe or flute, are absolutely dumb
If not melodious, do you play on me,

My pipers,—and if, sooth, you did not
 blow,
 Would no sound come? or is the
 music mine,
 As a man's voice or breath is called
 his own,
 Inbreathed by the Life-breather?
 There's a doubt
 For cloudy seasons!

But the sun was high
 When first I felt my pulses set them-
 selves

For concord; when the rhythmic
 turbulence

Of blood and brain swept outward
 upon words,

As wind upon the alders, blanching
 them

By turning up their under-natures
 till

They trembled in dilation. O delight
 And triumph of the poet,—who
 would say

A man's mere "yes," a woman's
 common "no,"

A little human hope of that or this,
 And says the word so that it burns
 you through

With a special revelation, shakes the
 heart

Of all the men and women in the
 world,

As if one came back from the dead
 and spoke,

With eyes too happy, a familiar thing
 Become divine i' the utterance!
 while for him

The poet, the speaker, he expands
 with joy;

The palpitating angel in his flesh
 Thrills inly with consenting fellow-
 ship

To those innumerable spirits who sun
 themselves

Outside of time.

O life, O poetry,
 —Which means life in life! cognisant
 of life

Beyond this blood-beat,—passionate
 for truth

Beyond these senses,—poetry, my
 life,—

My eagle, with both grappling feet
 still hot

From Zeus's thunder, who has rav-
 ished me

Away from all the shepherds, sheep,
 and dogs,

And set me in the Olympian roar
 and round

Of luminous faces, for a cup-bearer,
 To keep the mouths of all the god-
 heads moist

For everlasting laughter,—I, myself,
 Half drunk across the beaker, with
 their eyes!

How those gods look!

Enough so, Ganymede,
 We shall not bear above a round or
 two—

We drop the golden cup at Heré's foot
 And swoon back to the earth,—and
 find ourselves

Face-down among the pine-cones,
 cold with dew,

While the dogs bark, and many a
 shepherd scoffs,

"What's come now to the youth?"
 Such ups and downs

Have poets.

Am I such indeed? The name
 Is royal, and to sign it like a queen,
 Is what I dare not,—though some
 royal blood

Would seem to tingle in me now and
 then,

With sense of power and ache,—with
 imposthumes

And manias usual to the race. How-
 beit

I dare not; 'tis too easy to go mad,
 And ape a Bourbon in a crown of
 straws;

The thing's too common.

Many fervent souls.
 Strike rhyme on rhyme, who would
 strike steel on steel

If steel had offered, in a restless heat
 Of doing something. Many tender
 souls

Have strung their losses on a rhyming
 thread,

As children, cowslips:—the more
 pains they take,

The work more withers. Young men,
 ay, and maids,

Too often sow their wild oats in tame
 verse,

Before they sit down under their own
 vine

And live for use. Alas, near all the
 birds

Will sing at dawn,—and yet we do not
take
The chaffering swallow for the holy
lark.

In those days, though, I never ana-
lysed,
Not even myself. Analysis comes late.
You catch a sight of Nature, earliest,
In full front sun-face, and your eye-
lids wink

And drop before the wonder of 't;
you miss

The form, through seeing the light. I
lived, those days,
And wrote because I lived—unlicensed
else :

My heart beat in my brain. Life's
violent flood

Abolished bounds,—and, which my
neighbour's field,

Which mine, what mattered ? It is
so in youth.

We play at leap-frog over the god
Term ;

The love within us and the love with-
out

Are mixed, confounded ; if we are
loved or love,

We scarce distinguish. So, with other
power.

Being acted on and acting seem the
same :

In that first onrush of life's chariot-
wheels,

We know not if the forests move or we,

And so, like most young poets, in a
flush

Of individual life, I poured myself
Along the veins of others, and
achieved

Mere lifeless imitations of live verse,
And made the living answer for the
dead,

Profaning nature. " Touch not, do
not taste,

Nor handle,"—we're too legal, who
write young :

We beat the phorminx till we hurt our
thumbs,

As if still ignorant of counterpoint ;
We call the Muse . . . " O Muse,

benignant Muse !"—
As if we had seen her purple-braided
head

With the eyes in it, start between the
boughs

As often as a stag's. What make-
believe,

With so much earnest ! what effete
results,

From virile efforts ! what cold wire-
drawn odes,

From such white heats !—bucolics,
where the cows

Would scare the writer if they splashed
the mud

In lashing off the flies,—didactics,
driven

Against the heels of what the master
said ;

And counterfeiting epics, shrill with
trumps

A babe might blow between two
straining cheeks

Of bubbled rose, to make his mother
laugh ;

And elegiac griefs, and songs of
love,

Like cast-off nosegays picked up on
the road,

The worse for being warm : all these
things, writ

On happy mornings, with a morning
heart,

That leaps for love, is active for
resolve,

Weak for art only. Oft, the ancient
forms

Will thrill, indeed, in carrying the
young blood.

The wine-skins, now and then, a little
warped,

Will crack even, as the new wine
gurgles in.

Spare the old bottles !—spill not the
new wine.

By Keats's soul, the man who never
stepped

In gradual progress like another man,
But, turning grandly on his central
self,

Ensphered himself in twenty perfect
years

And died, not young, (the life of a
long life,

Distilled to a mere drop, falling like a
tear

Upon the world's cold cheek to make
it burn

For ever;) by that strong excepted
soul,
I count it strange, and hard to under-
stand,
That nearly all young poets should
write old;
That Pope was sexagenarian at six-
teen,
And beardless Byron academical,
And so with others. It may be, per-
haps,
Such have not settled long and deep
enough
In trance, to attain to clairvoyance,—
and still
The memory mixes with the vision,
spoils,
And works it turbid.

Or perhaps, again,
In order to discover the Muse-Sphinx,
The melancholy desert must sweep
round,
Behind you, as before.—

For me, I wrote
False poems, like the rest, and
thought them true,
Because myself was true in writing
them.
I, peradventure, have writ true ones
since
With less complacence.

But I could not hide
My quickening inner life from those at
watch.
They saw a light at a window now and
then,
They had not set there. Who had set
it there?
My father's sister started when she
caught
My soul agaze in my eyes. She could
not say
I had no business with a sort of soul,
But plainly she objected,—and
demurred,
That souls were dangerous things to
carry straight
Through all the spilt saltpetre of the
world.

She said sometimes, "Aurora, have
you done
Your task this morning?—Have you
read that book?
And are you ready for the crochet
here?"

As if she said, "I know there's some-
thing wrong;
I know I have not ground you down
enough
To flatten and bake you to a whole-
some crust
For household uses and proprieties,
Before the rain has got into my barn
And set the grains a-sprouting. What,
you're green
With out-door impudence? you al-
most grow?"
To which I answered, "Would she
hear my task,
And verify my abstract of the book?
And should I sit down to the crochet
work?
Was such her pleasure?" . . . Then
I sate and teased
The patient needle till it spilt the
thread,
Which oozed off from it in meander-
ing lace
From hour to hour. I was not, there-
fore, sad;
My soul was singing at a work apart
Behind the wall of sense, as safe from
harm
As sings the lark when sucked up out
of sight,
In vortices of glory and blue air.
And so, through forced work and
spontaneous work,
The inner life informed the outer life,
Reduced the irregular blood to settled
rhythms,
Made cool the forehead with fresh-
sprinkling dreams,
And, rounding to the spheric soul the
thin
Pined body, struck a colour up the
cheeks,
Though somewhat faint. I clenched
my brows across
My blue eyes greatening in the look-
ing-glass,
And said, "We'll live, Aurora! we'll
be strong.
The dogs are on us—but we will not
die."
Whoever lives true life, will love true
love,
I learnt to love that England. Very
oft,

Before the day was born, or otherwise
 Through secret windings of the after-
 noons,
 I threw my hunters off and plunged
 myself
 Among the deep hills, as a hunted
 stag
 Will take the waters, shivering with
 the fear
 And passion of the course. And
 when, at last
 Escaped,—so many a green slope
 built on slope
 Betwixt me and the enemy's house
 behind,
 I dared to rest, or wander,—like a
 rest
 Made sweeter for the step upon the
 grass,—
 And view the ground's most gentle
 dimplement
 (As if God's finger touched but did
 not press
 In making England !), such an up and
 down
 Of verdure,—nothing too much up or
 down,
 A ripple of land ; such little hills, the
 sky
 Can stoop to tenderly and the wheat-
 fields climb ;
 Such nooks of valleys, lined with or-
 chises,
 Fed full of noises by invisible streams ;
 And open pastures, where you scarcely
 tell
 White daisies from white dew,—at
 intervals
 The mythic oaks and elm-trees stand-
 ing out
 Self-poised upon their prodigy of
 shade,—
 I thought my father's land was worthy
 too
 Of being my Shakespeare's.
 Very oft alone,
 Unlicensed ; not unfrequently with
 leave
 To walk the third with Romney and
 his friend
 The rising painter, Vincent Carring-
 ton,
 Whom men judge hardly, as bee-
 bonneted,
 Because he holds that, paint a body
 well,

You paint a soul by implication, like
 The grand first Master. Pleasant
 walks ! for if
 He said . . . " When I was last in
 Italy " . . .
 It sounded as an instrument that's
 played
 Too far off for the tune—and yet it's
 fine
 To listen.
 Often we walked only two,
 If cousin Romney pleased to walk
 with me.
 We read, or talked, or quarrelled, as it
 chanced :
 We were not lovers, nor even friends
 well-matched—
 Say rather, scholars upon different
 tracks,
 And thinkers disagreed ; he, overfull
 Of what is, and I, haply, overbold
 For what might be.
 But then the thrushes sang,
 And shook my pulses and the elms'
 new leaves,—
 At which I turned, and held my finger
 up,
 And bade him mark that, howsoever
 the world
 Went ill, as he related, certainly
 The thrushes still sang in it.—At
 which word
 His brow would soften,—and he bore
 with me
 In melancholy patience, not unkind,
 While, breaking into voluble ecstasy,
 I flattered all the beauteous country
 round,
 As poets use . . . the skies, the
 clouds, the fields,
 The happy violets hiding from the
 roads
 The primroses run down to, carrying
 gold,—
 The tangled hedgerows, where the
 cows push out
 Impatient horns and tolerant churn-
 ing mouths
 'Twixt dripping ash-boughs,—hedg-
 rows all alive
 With birds and gnats and large white
 butterflies
 Which look as if the May-flower had
 caught life
 And palpitated forth upon the
 wind,—

Hills, vales, woods, netted in a silver
mist,
Farms, granges, doubled up among
the hills,
And cattle grazing in the watered
vales,
And cottage-chimneys smoking from
the woods,
And cottage-gardens smelling every-
where,
Confused with smell of orchards.
"See," I said,
"And see! is God not with us on the
earth?"
And shall we put Him down by aught
we do?
Who says there's nothing for the poor
and vile
Save poverty and wickedness? be-
hold!"
And ankle-deep in English grass I
leaped,
And clapped my hands, and called all
very fair.

In the beginning when God called all
good,
Even then, was evil near us, it is writ.
But we, indeed, who call things good
and fair,
The evil is upon us while we speak;
"Deliver us from evil", let us pray.

SECOND BOOK

TIMES followed one another. Came a
morn
I stood upon the brink of twenty
years,
And looked before and after, as I
stood
Woman and artist—either incom-
plete,
Both credulous of completion. There
I held
The whole creation in my little cup,
And smiled with thirsty lips before I
drank,
"Good health to you and me, sweet
neighbour mine,
And all these peoples."
I was glad, that day;
The June was in me, with its multi-
tudes
Of nightingales all singing in the dark,

And rosebuds reddening where the
calyx split.
I felt so young, so strong, so sure of
God!
So glad, I could not choose be very
wise!
And, old at twenty, was inclined to
pull
My childhood backward in a childish
jest
To see the face of 't once more, and
farewell!
In which fantastic mood I bounded
forth
At early morning, would not wait so
long
As even to snatch my bonnet by the
strings,
But, brushing a green trail across the
lawn
With my gown in the dew, took will
and way
Among the acacias of the shrubberies,
To fly my fancies in the open air
And keep my birthday, till my aunt
awoke
To stop good dreams. Meanwhile I
murmured on,
As honeyed bees keep humming to
themselves;
"The worthiest poets have remained
uncrowned
Till death has bleached their fore-
heads to the bone,
And so with me it must be, unless I
prove
Unworthy of the grand adversity,—
And certainly I would not fail so
much.
What, therefore, if I crown myself to-
day
In sport, not pride, to learn the feel of
it,
Before my brows be numb as Dante's
own
To all the tender pricking of such
leaves?
Such leaves! what leaves?"
I pulled the branches down
To choose from.
"Not the bay! I choose no bay;
The fates deny us if we are overbold:
Nor myrtle—which means chiefly
love; and love
Is something awful which one dares
not touch

So early o' mornings. This verberna strains
 The point of passionate fragrance ;
 and hard by,
 This guelder-rose, at far too slight a beck
 Of the wind, will toss about her flower-apples.
 Ah—there's my choice!—that ivy on the wall,
 That headlong ivy ! not a leaf will grow
 But thinking of a wreath. Large leaves, smooth leaves,
 Serrated like my vines, and half as green.
 I like such ivy ; bold to leap a height
 'Twas strong to climb ! as good to grow on graves
 As twist about a thyrus ; pretty too,
 (And that's not ill) when twisted round a comb."

Thus speaking to myself, half singing it,
 Because some thoughts are fashioned like a bell
 To ring with once being touched, I drew a wreath
 Drenched, blinding me with dew, across my brow,
 And fastening it behind so, . . . turning faced
 . . . My public!—cousin Romney—with a mouth
 Twice graver than his eyes.

I stood there fixed—
 My arms up, like the caryatid sole
 Of some abolished temple, helplessly
 Persistent in a gesture which derides
 A former purpose. Yet my blush was flame,
 As if from flax, not stone.

"Aurora Leigh,
 The earliest of Auroras !"
 Hand stretched out
 I clasped, as shipwrecked men will clasp a hand,
 Indifferent to the sort of palm. The tide
 Had caught me at my pastime, writing down
 My foolish name too near upon the sea
 Which drowned me with a blush as foolish. "You,

My cousin !"

The smile died out in his eyes
 And dropped upon his lips, a cold dead weight,
 For just a moment . . . "Here's a book, I found !
 No name writ on it—poems, by the form ;
 Some Greek upon the margin,—lady's Greek,
 Without the accents. Read it? Not a word.
 I saw at once the thing had witchcraft in't,
 Whereof the reading calls up dangerous spirits ;
 I rather bring it to the witch."

"My book !

You found it" . . .

"In the hollow by the stream
 That beech leans down into—of which you said,
 The Oread in it has a Naiad's heart
 And pines for waters."

"Thank you."

"Thanks to you,

My cousin ! that I have seen you not too much
 Witch, scholar, poet, dreamer, and the rest,
 To be a woman also."

With a glance

The smile rose in his eyes again, and touched
 The ivy on my forehead, light as air.
 I answered gravely, "Poets needs must be
 Or men or women—more's the pity."

"Ah,

But men, and still less women, happily,
 Scarce need be poets. Keep to the green wreath,
 Since even dreaming of the stone and bronze
 Brings headaches, pretty cousin, and defines
 The clean white morning dresses."

"So you judge!

Because I love the beautiful, I must
 Love pleasure chiefly, and be overcharged
 For ease and whiteness ! Well—you know the world,
 And only miss your cousin ; 'tis not much !—

But learn this : I would rather take
 my part
 With God's Dead, who afford to walk
 in white
 Yet spread His glory, than keep quiet
 here,
 And gather up my feet from even a
 step,
 For fear to soil my gown in so much
 dust.
 I choose to walk at all risks.—Here, if
 heads
 That hold a rhythmic thought, must
 ache perforce,
 For my part, I choose headaches,—
 and to-day's
 My birthday."
 "Dear Aurora, choose instead
 To cure them. You have balsams."
 "I perceive
 The headache is too noble for my sex.
 You think the heartache would sound
 decenter,
 Since that's the woman's special,
 proper ache,
 And altogether tolerable, except
 To a woman."
 Saying which, I loosed my wreath,
 And, swinging it beside me as I
 walked,
 Half petulant, half playful, as we
 walked,
 I sent a sidelong look to find his
 thought,—
 As falcon set on falconer's finger may,
 With sidelong head, and startled,
 braving eye,
 Which means, "You'll see—you'll
 see! I'll soon take flight—
 You shall not hinder." He, as shak-
 ing out
 His hand and answering "Fly then,"
 did not speak,
 Except by such a gesture. Silently
 We paced, until, just coming into
 sight
 Of the house-windows, he abruptly
 caught
 At one end of the swinging wreath,
 and said
 "Aurora!" There I stopped short,
 breath and all.
 "Aurora, let's be serious, and throw
 by
 This game of head and heart. Life
 means, be sure,

Both heart and head,—both active,
 both complete,
 And both in earnest. Men and
 women make
 The world, as head and heart make
 human life.
 Work man, work woman, since there's
 work to do
 In this beleaguered earth, for head
 and heart,
 And thought can never do the work
 of love!
 But work for ends, I mean for uses ;
 not
 For such sleek fringes (do you call
 them ends ?
 Still less God's glory) as we sew our-
 selves
 Upon the velvet of those baldaquins
 Held 'twixt us and the sun. That
 book of yours,
 I have not read a page of ; but I toss
 A rose up—it falls calyx down, you
 see! . . .
 The chances are that, being a woman,
 young,
 And pure, with such a pair of large,
 calm eyes, . . .
 You write as well . . . and ill . . .
 upon the whole,
 As other women. If as well, what
 then ?
 If even a little better, . . . still,
 what then ?
 We want the Best in art now, or no
 art.
 The time is done for facile settings up
 Of minnow gods, nymphs here, and
 tritons there ;
 The polytheists have gone out in God,
 That unity of Bests. No best, no
 God!—
 And so with art, we say. Give art's
 divine,
 Direct, indubitable, real as grief,—
 Or leave us to the grief we grow our-
 selves
 Divine by overcoming with mere hope
 And most prosaic patience. You,
 you are young
 As Eve with nature's daybreak on her
 face ;
 But this same world you are come to,
 dearest coz,
 Has done with keeping birthdays,
 saves her wreaths

To hang upon her ruins,—and for-
 gets
 To rhyme the cry with which she still
 beats back
 Those savage, hungry dogs that hunt
 her down
 To the empty grave of Christ. The
 world's hard pressed ;
 The sweat of labour in the early curse
 Has (turning acrid in six thousand
 years)
 Become the sweat of torture. Who
 has time,
 An hour's time . . . think ! . . . to
 sit upon a bank
 And hear the cymbal tinkle in white
 hands ?
 When Egypt's slain, I say, let Miriam
 sing !—
 Before . . . where's Moses ? ”
 “ Ah—exactly that !
 Where's Moses ?—is a Moses to be
 found ?—
 You'll seek him vainly in the bul-
 rushes,
 While I in vain touch cymbals. Yet,
 concede,
 Such sounding brass has done some
 actual good
 (The application in a woman's hand,
 If that were credible, being scarcely
 spoilt,)
 In colonising beehives.”
 “ There it is !—
 You play beside a death-bed like a
 child,
 Yet measure to yourself a prophet's
 place
 To teach the living. None of all
 these things,
 Can women understand. You genera-
 lise
 Oh, nothing ! not even grief ! Your
 quick-breathed hearts,
 So sympathetic to the personal pang,
 Close on each separate knife-stroke,
 yielding up
 A whole life at each wound ; incapable
 Of deepening, widening a large lap of
 life
 To hold the world-full woe. The
 human race
 To you means, such a child, or such a
 man,
 You saw one morning waiting in the
 cold,
 Beside that gate, perhaps. You
 gather up
 A few such cases, and, when strong,
 sometimes
 Will write of factories and of slaves,
 as if
 Your father were a negro, and your
 son
 A spinner in the mills. All's yours
 and you,—
 All, coloured with your blood, or
 otherwise
 Just nothing to you. Why, I call
 you hard
 To general suffering. Here's the
 world half blind
 With intellectual light, half brutalised
 With civilisation, having caught the
 plague
 In silks from Tarsus, shrieking east
 and west
 Along a thousand railroads, mad with
 pain
 And sin too ! . . . does one woman
 of you all
 (You who weep easily) grow pale to
 see
 This tiger shake his cage ?—does one
 of you
 Stand still from dancing, stop from
 stringing pearls,
 And pine and die, because of the great
 sum
 Of universal anguish ?—Show me a
 tear
 Wet as Cordelia's, in eyes bright as
 yours,
 Because the world is mad ! You can-
 not count,
 That you should weep for this ac-
 count, not you !
 You weep for what you know. A
 red-haired child
 Sick in a fever, if you touch him once,
 Though but so little as with a finger-
 tip,
 Will set you weeping ; but a million
 sick . . .
 You could as soon weep for the rule of
 three,
 Or compound fractions. Therefore,
 this same world
 Uncomprehended by you, must re-
 main
 Uninfluenced by you.—Women as
 you are,

Merewomen, personal and passionate,
You give us doting mothers, and
chaste wives,
Sublime Madonnas, and enduring
saints!

We get no Christ from you,—and
verily

We shall not get a poet, in my mind."

"With which conclusion you con-
clude." . . .

"But this—
That you, Aurora, with the large live
brow

And steady eyelids, cannot conde-
scend

To play at art, as children play at
swords,

To show a pretty spirit, chiefly ad-
mired

Because true action is impossible.
You never can be satisfied with
praise

Which men give women when they
judge a book

Not as mere work, but as mere
woman's work,

Expressing the comparative respect
Which means the absolute scorn.

'Oh, excellent!

What grace! what facile turns! what
fluent sweeps!

What delicate discernment . . .
almost thought!

The book does honour to the sex, we
hold.

Among our female authors we make
room

For this fair writer, and congratu-
late

The country that produces in these
times

Such women, competent to . . .
spell.'"

"Stop there!"

I answered—burning through his
thread of talk

With a quick flame of emotion,—
"You have read

My soul, if not my book, and argue
well

I would not condescend . . . we will
not say

To such a kind of praise (a worthless
end

Is praise of all kinds), but to such a use

Of holy art and golden life. I am
young,

And peradventure weak—you tell me
so—

Through being a woman. And, for
all the rest,

Take thanks for justice. I would
rather dance

At fairs on tight-rope, till the babies
dropped

Their gingerbread for joy,—than
shift the types

For tolerable verse, intolerable
To men who act and suffer. Better
far,

Pursue a frivolous trade by serious
means,

Than a sublime art frivolously."

"You,
Choose nobler work than either, O
moist eyes,

And hurrying lips, and heaving heart!
We are young,

Aurora, you and I. The world . . .
look round . . .

The world, we've come to late, is
swollen hard

With perished generations and their
sins:

The civiliser's spade grinds horribly
On dead men's bones, and cannot
turn up soil

That's otherwise than fetid. All suc-
cess

Proves partial failure; all advance
implies

What's left behind; all triumph,
something crushed

At the chariot-wheels; all govern-
ment, some wrong:

And rich men make the poor, who
curse the rich,

Who agonise together, rich and poor,
Under and over, in the social spasm

And crisis of the ages. Here's an
age,

That makes its own vocation! here,
we have stepped

Across the bounds of time! here's
nought to see,

But just the rich man and just
Lazarus,

And both in torments; with a medi-
ate gulf,

Though not a hint of Abraham's
bosom. Who,

Being man and human, can stand
calmly by
And view these things, and never
tease his soul

For some great cure? No physic for
this grief,

In all the earth and heavens too?"

"You believe
In God, for your part?—ay? that He
Who makes,

Can make good things from ill things,
best from worst,

As men plant tulips upon dunghills
when

They wish them finest?"

"True. A death-heat is
The same as life-heat, to be accurate;
And in all nature is no death at all,
As men account of death, as long as
God

Stands witnessing for life perpetually,
By being just God. That's abstract
truth, I know,

Philosophy, or sympathy with God:
But I, I sympathise with man, not
God,

I think I was a man for chiefly this;
And when I stand beside a dying bed,
It's death to me. Observe,—it had
not much

Consoled the race of mastodons to
know

Before they went to fossil, that anon
Their place should quicken with the
elephant;

They were not elephants but masto-
dons:

And I, a man, as men are now, and
not

As men may be hereafter, feel with
men

In the agonising present."

"Is it so,"
I said, "my cousin? is the world so
bad,

While I hear nothing of it through
the trees?

The world was always evil,—but so
bad?

"So bad, Aurora. Dear, my soul is
grey

With poring over the long sum of ill;
So much for vice, so much for dis-
content,

So much for the necessities of power,

So much for the connivances of fear,—
Coherent in statistical despairs

With such a total of distracted life,...
To see it down in figures on a page,

Plain, silent, clear... as God sees
through the earth

The sense of all the graves!...
that's terrible

For one who is not God, and cannot
right

The wrong he looks on. May I choose
indeed

But vow away my years, my means,
my aims,

Among the helpers, if there's any
help

In such a social strait? The com-
mon blood

That swings along my veins, is strong
enough

To draw me to this duty."

Then I spoke,
"I have not stood long on the strand
of life,

And these salt waters have had
scarcely time

To creep so high up as to wet my feet,
I cannot judge these tides—I shall,
perhaps,

A woman's always younger than a
man

At equal years, because she is dis-
allowed

Maturing by the outdoor sun and air,
And kept in long-clothes past the age
to walk.

Ah well, I know you men judge other-
wise!

You think a woman ripens as a
peach,—

In the cheeks, chiefly. Pass it to me
now;

I'm young in age, and younger still, I
think,

As a woman. But a child may say
amen

To a bishop's prayer and see the way
it goes;

And I, incapable to loose the knot
Of social questions, can approve,
applaud

Angust compassion, Christian thoughts
that shoot

Beyond the vulgar white of personal
aims.

Accept my reverence."

There he glowed on me
With all his face and eyes. "No
other help?"

aid he—"no more than so?"

"What help?" I asked.
You'd scorn my help,—as Nature's
self, you say,

has scorned to put her music in my
mouth,

because a woman's. Do you now
turn round

and ask for what a woman cannot
give?"

For what she only can, I turn and
ask,"

he answered, catching up my hands
in his,

and dropping on me from his high-
eaved brow

the full weight of his soul,—“I ask
for love,

and that, she can; for life in fellow-
ship

through bitter duties—that, I know
she can;

for wifehood . . . will she?"

"Now," I said, "may God
be witness 'twixt us two!" and with
the word,

seemed I floated into a sudden
light

above his stature,—“am I proved
too weak

to stand alone, yet strong enough
to bear

such leaners on my shoulder? poor to
think,

yet rich enough to sympathise with
thought?

incompetent to sing, as blackbirds
can,

yet competent to love, like him?"

I paused:
Perhaps I darkened, as the light-
house will

That turns upon the sea. "It's al-
ways so!

Anything does for a wife."

"Aurora, dear,

and dearly honoured" . . . he
pressed in at once

With eager utterance,—“you trans-
late me ill.

I do not contradict my thought of
you

Which is most reverent, with another
thought

Found less so. If your sex is weak
for art,

(And I who said so, did but honour
you

By using truth in courtship) it is
strong

For life and duty. Place your fecund
heart

In mine, and let us blossom for the
world

That wants love's colour in the grey
of time.

With all my talk I can but set you
where

You look down coldly on the arena-
heaps

Of headless bodies, shapeless, indis-
tinct!

The Judgment-Angels scarce would find
his way

Through such a heap of generalised
distress,

To the individual man with lips and
eyes—

Much less Aurora. Ah, my sweet,
come down,

And, hand in hand, we'll go where
yours shall touch

These victims, one by one! till, one
by one,

The formless, nameless trunk of every
man

Shall seem to wear a head, with hair
you know,

And every woman catch your mother's
face

To melt you into passion."

"I am a girl,"

I answered slowly; "you do well to
name

My mother's face. Though far too
early, alas,

God's hand did interpose 'twixt it
and me,

I know so much of love, as used to
shine

In that face and another. Just so
much;

No more indeed at all. I have not
seen

So much love since, I pray you pardon
me,

As answers even to make a marriage
with,

In this cold land of England. What
you love,
Is not a woman, Romney, but a cause :
You want a helpmate, not a mistress,
sir,—

A wife to help your ends . . . in her
no end !

Your cause is noble, your ends excel-
lent,

But I, being most unworthy of these
and that,

Do otherwise conceive of love. Fare-
well."

"Farewell, Aurora? you reject me
thus?"

He said.

"Sir, you were married long ago.

You have a wife already whom you
love,

Your social theory. Bless you both,
I say.

For my part, I am scarcely meek
enough

To be the handmaid of a lawful
spouse.

Do I look a Hagar, think you?"

"So, you jest!"

"Nay so, I speak in earnest," I
replied.

"You treat of marriage too much
like, at least,

A chief apostle; you would bear
with you

A wife . . . a sister . . . shall we
speak it out?

A sister of charity."

"Then, must it be
Indeed farewell? And was I so far
wrong

In hope and in illusion, when I took
The woman to be nobler than the man,

Yourself the noblest woman,—in the
use

And comprehension of what love is,—
love,

That generates the likeness of itself
Through all heroic duties? so far
wrong,

In saying bluntly, venturing truth
on love,

'Come, human creature, love and
work with me,'—

Instead of, 'Lady, thou art wondrous
fair,

And, where the Graces walk before,
the Muse

Will follow at the lighting of their
eyes,

And where the Muse walks, lovers
need to creep :

Turn round and' love me, or I die of
love.'"

With quiet indignation I broke in,
"You misconceive the question like a
man,

Who sees a woman as the complement
Of his sex merely. You forget too
much

That every creature, female as the
male,

Stands single in responsible act and
thought,

As also in birth and death. Who-
ever says

To a loyal woman, 'Love and work
with me,'

Will get fair answers, if the work and
love,

Being good themselves, are good for
her—the best

She was born for. Women of a
softer mood,

Surprised by men when scarcely
awake to life,

Will sometimes only hear the first
word, love,

And catch up with it any kind of work,
Indifferent, so that dear love go with
it :

I do not blame such women, though,
for love,

They pick much oakum; earth's
fanatics make

Too frequently heaven's saints. But
me, your work

Is not the best for,—nor your love
the best,

Nor able to commend the kind of
work

For love's sake merely. Ah, you
force me, sir,

To be over-bold in speaking of my-
self,—

I, too, have my vocation,—work to
do.

The heavens and earth have set me,
since I changed

My father's face for theirs,—and,
though your world

Were twice as wretched as you represent,
 Most serious work, most necessary work,
 As any of the economists'. Reform,
 Make trade a Christian possibility,
 And individual right no general wrong;
 Wipe out earth's furrows of the Thine and Mine,
 And leave one green, for men to play at bowls,
 With innings for them all! . . . what then, indeed,
 If mortals were not greater by the head
 Than any of their prosperities? what then,
 Unless the artist keep up open roads
 Betwixt the seen and unseen,—bursting through
 The best of your conventions with his best,
 The speakable, imaginable best
 God bids him speak, to prove what lies beyond
 Both speech and imagination? A starved man
 Exceeds a fat beast: we'll not barter, sir,
 The beautiful for barley.—And, even so,
 I hold you will not compass your poor ends
 Of barley-feeding and material ease,
 Without a poet's individualism
 To work your universal. It takes a soul,
 To move a body: it takes a high-souled man,
 To move the masses . . . even to a cleaner style:
 It takes the ideal, to blow a hair's-breadth off
 The dust of the actual.—Ah, your Fouriers failed,
 Because not poets enough to understand
 That life develops from within.—For me,
 Perhaps I am not worthy, as you say,
 Of work like this! . . . perhaps a woman's soul
 Aspires, and not creates! yet we aspire,

And yet I'll try out your perhappes, sir;
 And if I fail . . . why, burn me up my straw
 Like other false works—I'll not ask for grace,
 Your scorn is better, cousin Romney. I
 Who love my art, would never wish it lower
 To suit my stature. I may love my art.
 You'll grant that even a woman may love art,
 Seeing that to waste true love on anything,
 Is womanly, past question."

I retain
 The very last word which I said, that day,
 As you the creaking of the door, years past,
 Which let upon you such disabling news
 You ever after have been graver. He,
 His eyes, the motions in his silent mouth,
 Were fiery points on which my words were caught,
 Transfixed for ever in my memory
 For his sake, not their own. And yet I know
 I did not love him . . . nor he me . . . that's sure . . .
 And what I said, is unrepented of,
 As truth is always. Yet . . . a princely man!—
 If hard to me, heroic for himself!
 He bears down on me through the slanting years,
 The stronger for the distance. If he had loved,
 Ay, loved me, with that retributive face, . . .
 I might have been a common woman now,
 And happier, less known and less left alone;
 Perhaps a better woman after all,—
 With chubby children hanging on my neck
 To keep me low and wise. Ah me, the vines
 That bear such fruit, are proud to stoop with it,

The palm stands upright in a realm of
sand.

And I, who spoke the truth then,
stand upright,
Still worthy of having spoken out the
truth,

By being content I spoke it, though it
set

Him there, me here.—O woman's
vile remorse,

To hanker after a mere name, a show,
A supposition, a potential love!

Does every man who names love in
our lives,

Become a power for that? is love's
true thing

So much best to us, that what per-
sonates love

Is next best? A potential love, for-
sooth!

We are not so vile. No, no—he
cleaves, I think,

This man, this image, . . . chiefly for
the wrong

And shock he gave my life, in finding
me

Precisely where the devil of my youth
Had set me, on those mountain-

peaks of hope
All glittering with the dawn-dew, all
erect

And famished for the morning,—say-
ing, while

I looked for empire and much tribute,
"Come,

I have some worthy work for thee
below.

Come, sweep my barns, and keep my
hospitals,—

And I will pay thee with a current
coin

Which men give women."

As we spoke, the grass
Was trod in haste beside us, and my
aunt,

With smile distorted by the sun,—
face, voice,

As much at issue with the summer-
day

As if you brought a candle out of
doors,—

Broke in with, "Romney, here!—
My child, entreat

Your cousin to the house, and have
your talk,

If girls must talk upon their birth-
days. Come."

He answered for me calmly, with pale
lips

That seemed to motion for a smile in
vain.

"The talk is ended, madam, where
we stand.

Your brother's daughter has dis-
missed me here;

And all my answer can be better said
Beneath the trees, than wrong by

such a word
Your house's hospitalities. Farewell."

With that he vanished. I could hear
his heel

Ring bluntly in the lane, as down he
leapt

The short way from us.—Then, a
measured speech

Withdrew me. "What means this,
Aurora Leigh?

My brother's daughter has dismissed
my guests?"

The lion in me felt the keeper's voice,
Through all its quivering dewlaps: I

was quelled
Before her,—meekened to the child
she knew:

I prayed her pardon, said, "I had
little thought

To give dismissal to a guest of hers,
In letting go a friend of mine, who

came
To take me into service as a wife,—
No more than that, indeed."

"No more, no more?
Pray Heaven," she answered, "that

I was not mad.
I could not mean to tell her to her face

That Romney Leigh had asked me for
a wife,

And I refused him?"

"Did he ask?" I said;

"I think he rather stooped to take me
up

For certain uses which he found to do
For something called a wife. He

never asked."

"What stuff!" she answered; "are
they queens, these girls?

They must have mantles, stitched
with twenty silks,

Spread out upon the ground, before
they'll step
One footstep for the noblest lover
born."

"But I am born," I said with firm-
ness, "I,
To walk another way than his, dear
aunt."

"You walk, you walk! A babe at
thirteen months

Will walk as well as you," she cried in
haste,

"Without a steady finger. Why,
you child,

God help you, you are groping in the
dark,

For all this sunlight. You suppose,
perhaps,

That you, sole offspring of an opulent
man,

Are rich and free to choose a way to
walk?

You think, and it's a reasonable
thought,

That I besides, being well to do in life,
Will leave my handful in my niece's
hand

When death shall paralyse these fin-
gers? Pray,

Pray, child—albeit I know you love
me not,—

As if you loved me, that I may not
die!

For when I die and leave you, out you
go

(Unless I make room for you in my
grave),

Unhoused, unfed, my dear, poor
brother's lamb,

(Ah heaven,—that pains!)—without
a right to crop

A single blade of grass beneath these
trees,

Or cast a lamb's small shadow on the
lawn,

Unfed, unfolded! Ah, my brother,
here's

The fruit you planted in your foreign
loves!—

Ay, there's the fruit he planted!
never look

Astonished at me with your mother's
eyes,

For it was they, who set you where
you are,

An undowered orphan. Child, your
father's choice

Of that said mother, disinherited
His daughter, his and hers. Men do
not think

Of sons and daughters, when they fall
in love,

So much more than of sisters; other-
wise,

He would have paused to ponder
what he did,

And shrunk before that clause in the
entail

Excluding offspring by a foreign wife
(The clause set up a hundred years
ago

By a Leigh who wedded a French
dancing-girl

And had his heart danced over in re-
turn);

But this man shrunk at nothing,
never thought

Of you, Aurora, any more than me—
Your mother must have been a pretty
thing,

For all the coarse Italian blacks and
browns,

To make a good man, which my
brother was,

Uncharly of the duties to his house;
But so it fell indeed. Our Cousin
Vane,

Vane Leigh, the father of this Rom-
ney, wrote

Directly on your birth, to Italy,
'I ask your baby daughter for my
son

In whom the entail now merges by the
law.

Betroth her to us out of love, instead
Of colder reasons, and she shall not
lose

By love or law from henceforth'—so
he wrote;

A generous cousin was my cousin
Vane.

Remember how he drew you to his
knee

The year you came here, just before
he died,

And hollowed out his hands to hold
your cheeks,

And wished them redder,—you re-
member Vane?

And now his son who represents our
house

And holds the fiefs and manors in his
place,
To whom reverts my pittance when I
die
(Except a few books and a pair of
shawls),
The boy is generous like him, and
prepared
To carry out his kindest word and
thought
To you, Aurora. Yes, a fine young
man
Is Romney Leigh; although the sun
of youth
Has shone too straight upon his brain,
I know,
And fevered him with dreams of do-
ing good
To good-for-nothing people. But a
wife
Will put all right, and stroke his
temples cool
With healthy touches" . . .

I broke in at that,
I could not lift my heavy heart to
breathe
Till then, but then I raised it, and it
fell
In broken words like these—"No
need to wait.
The dream of doing good to . . . me,
at least,
Is ended, without waiting for a wife
To cool the fever for him. We've
escaped
That danger . . . thank Heaven for
it."

"You," she cried,
"Have got a fever. What, I talk
and talk
An hour long to you,—I instruct you
how
You cannot eat or drink or stand or
sit,
Or even die, like any decent wretch
In all this unroofed and unfurnished
world,
Without your cousin,—and you still
maintain
There's room 'twixt him and you, for
flirting fans
And running knots in eyebrows!
You must have
A pattern lover sighing on his knee:
You do not count enough a noble
heart,

Above book-patterns, which this very
morn
Unclosed itself, in two dear fathers'
names,
To embrace your orphaned life! fie,
fie! But stay,
I write a word, and counteract this
sin."

She would have turned to leave me,
but I clung.
"O sweet my father's sister, hear my
word
Before you write yours. Cousin Vane
did well,
And cousin Romney well,—and I well
too,
In casting back with all my strength
and will
The good they meant me. O my God,
my God!
God meant me good, too, when He
hindered me
From saying 'Yes' this morning. If
you write
A word, it shall be 'No.' I say 'No,
no'!
I tie up 'No' upon His altar-horns,
Quite out of reach of perjury! At
least
My soul is not a pauper; I can live
At least my soul's life, without alms
from men;
And if it must be in heaven instead of
earth,
Let heaven look to it,—I am not
afraid."

She seized my hands with both hers,
strained them fast,
And drew her probing and unscrupu-
lous eyes
Right through me, body and heart.
"Yet, foolish sweet,
You love this man. I have watched
you when he came,
And when he went, and when we've
talked of him:
I am not old for nothing; I can tell
The weather-signs of love—you love
this man."

Girls blush, sometimes, because they
are alive,
Half wishing they were dead to save
the shame.

The sudden blush devours them, neck
and brow ;

They have drawn too near the fire of
life, like gnats,

And flare up bodily, wings and all.
What then ?

Who's sorry for a gnat . . . or girl ?
I blushed.

I feel the brand upon my forehead
now

Strike hot, sear deep, as guiltless men
may feel

The felon's iron, say, and scorn the
mark

Of what they are not. Most illogical
Irrational nature of our womanhood,

That blushes one way, feels another
way,

And prays, perhaps, another ! After
all,

We cannot be the equal of the male,
Who rules his blood a little.

For although
I blushed indeed, as if I loved the
man,

And her incisive smile, accrediting
That treason of false witness in my
blush,

Did bow me downward like a swathe
of grass

Below its level that struck me,—I
attest

The conscious skies and all their daily
suns,

I think I loved him not . . . nor
then, nor since . . .

Nor ever. Do we love the school-
master,

Being busy in the woods ? much less,
being poor,

The overseer of the parish ? Do we
keep

Our love, to pay our debts with ?

White and cold
I grew next moment. As my blood
recoiled

From that imputed ignominy, I made
My heart great with it. Then, at
last, I spoke,—

Spoke veritable words, but passionate,
Too passionate perhaps . . . ground
up with sobs

To shapeless endings. She let fall
my hands,

And took her smile off, in sedate dis-
gust,

As peradventure she had touched a
snake,—

A dead snake, mind !—and, turning
round, replied,

“ We'll leave Italian manners, if you
please.

I think you had an English father,
child,

And ought to find it possible to speak
A quiet ‘ Yes ’ or ‘ No ’ like English

girls,
Without convulsions. In another

month
We'll take another answer . . . no,
or yes.”

With that, she left me in the garden-
walk.

I had a father ! yes, but long ago—
How long it seemed that moment.

Oh, how far,
How far and safe, God, dost Thou
keep Thy saints

When once gone from us ! We may
call against

The lighted windows of thy fair June-
heaven

Where all the souls are happy,—and
not one,

Not even my father, look from work
or play

To ask, “ Who is it that cries after us,
Below there, in the dusk ? ” Yet

formerly
He turned his face upon me quick
enough,

If I said “ Father.” Now I might
cry loud ;

The little lark reached higher with his
song

Than I with crying. Oh, alone, alone,—
Not troubling any in heaven, nor any

on earth,

I stood there in the garden, and
looked up

The deaf blue sky that brings the
roses out

On such June mornings.

You who keep account
Of crisis and transition in this life,

Set down the first time Nature says
plain “ No ”

To some “ Yes ” in you, and walks
over you

In gorgeous sweeps of scorn. We all
begin

By singing with the birds, and running fast
 With June-days, hand in hand : but once, for all,
 The birds must sing against us, and the sun
 Strike down upon us like a friend's sword caught
 By an enemy to slay us, while we read
 The dear name on the blade which bites at us !—
 That's bitter and convincing : after that,
 We seldom doubt that something in the large
 Smooth order of creation, though no more
 Than haply a man's footstep, has gone wrong,

Some tears fell down my cheeks, and then I smiled,
 As those smile who have no face in the world
 To smile back to them. I had lost a friend
 In Romney Leigh ; the thing was sure—a friend,
 Who had looked at me most gently now and then,
 And spoken of my favourite books . . . "our books" . . .
 With such a voice ! Well, voice and look were now
 More utterly shut out from me, I felt,
 Than even my father's. Romney now was turned
 To a benefactor, to a generous man,
 Who had tied himself to marry . . . me, instead
 Of such a woman, with low timorous lids
 He lifted with a sudden word one day,
 And left, perhaps, for my sake.—Ah, self-tied
 By a contract,—male Iphigenia, bound
 At a fatal Aulis, for the winds to change
 (But loose him—they'll not change) ; he well might seem
 A little cold and dominant in love !
 He had a right to be dogmatical,
 This poor, good Romney. Love, to him, was made

A simple law-clause. If I married him,
 I would not dare to call my soul my own,
 Which so he had bought and paid for : every thought
 And every heart-beat down there in the bill,—
 Not one found honestly deductible
 From any use that pleased him ! He might cut
 My body into coins to give away
 Among his other paupers ; change my sons,
 While I stood dumb as Griseld, for black babes
 Or piteous foundlings ; might unquestioned set
 My right hand teaching in the Ragged Schools,
 My left hand washing in the Public Baths,
 What time my angel of the Ideal stretched
 Both his to me in vain ! I could not claim
 The poor right of a mouse in a trap, to squeal,
 And take so much as pity, from myself.

Farewell, good Romney ! if I loved you even,
 I could but ill afford to let you be
 So generous to me. Farewell, friend, since friend
 Betwixt us two, forsooth, must be a word
 So heavily overladen. And, since help
 Must come to me from those who love me not,
 Farewell, all helpers—I must help myself,
 And am alone from henceforth.—Then I stooped,
 And lifted the soiled garland from the ground,
 And set it on my head as bitterly
 As when the Spanish king did crown the bones
 Of his dead love. So be it. I preserve
 That crown still,—in the drawer there ! 'twas the first ;

The rest are like it ;—those Olympian
crowns,
We run for, till we lose sight of the
sun
In the dust of the racing chariots !
After that,
Before the evening fell, I had a note
Which ran,—“ Aurora, sweet Chal-
dean, you read
My meaning backward like your
Eastern books,
While I am from the West, dear. Read
me now
A little plainer. Did you hate me
quite
But yesterday ? I loved you for my
part ;
I love you. If I spoke untenderly
This morning, my beloved, pardon
it ;
And comprehend me that I loved you
so,
I set you on the level of my soul,
And overwashed you with the bitter
brine
Of some habitual thoughts. Hence-
forth, my flower,
Be planted out of reach of any such,
And lean the side you please, with all
your leaves !
Write woman's verses and dream
woman's dreams ;
But let me feel your perfume in my
home,
To make my Sabbath after working-
days ;
Bloom out your youth beside me,—
be my wife.”
I wrote in answer—“ We, Chaldeans,
discern
Still farther than we read. I know
your heart,
And shut it like the holy book it is,
Reserved for mild-eyed saints to pore
upon
Betwixt their prayers at vespers.
Well, you're right,
I did not surely hate you yesterday ;
And yet I do not love you enough to-
day
To wed you, cousin Romney. Take
this word,
And let it stop you as a generous man
From speaking farther. You may
tease, indeed,

And blow about my feelings, or my
leaves,—
And here's my aunt will help you with
east winds,
And break a stalk, perhaps, torment-
ing me ;
But certain flowers grow near as deep
as trees,
And, cousin, you'll not move my root,
not you,
With all your confluent storms. Then
let me grow
Within my wayside hedge, and pass
your way !
This flower has never as much to say
to you
As the antique tomb which said to
travellers, ‘ Pause,’
‘ Siste, viator.’ ” Ending thus, I
signed.
The next week passed in silence, so
the next,
And several after : Romney did not
come,
Nor my aunt chide me. I lived on
and on,
As if my heart were kept beneath a
glass,
And everybody stood, all eyes and
ears,
To see and hear it tick. I could not
sit,
Nor walk, nor take a book, nor lay it
down,
Nor sew on steadily, nor drop a
stitch
And a sigh with it, but I felt her looks
Still cleaving to me, like the sucking
asp
To Cleopatra's breast, persistently
Through the intermittent pantings.
Being observed,
When observation is not sympathy,
Is just being tortured. If she said a
word,
A “ Thank you,” or an “ If it please
you, dear,”
She meant a commination, or, at best,
An exorcism against the devildom
Which plainly held me. So with all
the house.
Susannah could not stand and twist
my hair,
Without such glancing at the looking-
glass

To see my face there, that she missed
the plait :

And John,—I never sent my plate for
soup,

Or did not send it, but the foolish
John

Resolved the problem, 'twixt his nap-
kined thumbs,

Of what was signified by taking soup
Or choosing mackerel. Neighbours,

who dropped in
On morning visits, feeling a joint
wrong,

Smiled admonition, sate uneasily,
And talked with measured, empha-
sised reserve.

Of parish news, like doctors to the
sick,

When not called in,—as if, with leave
to speak,

They might say something. Nay, the
very dog

Would watch me from his sun-patch
on the floor,

In alternation with the large black fly
Not yet in reach of snapping. So I
lived.

A Roman, died so ; smeared with
honey, teased

By insects, stared to torture by the
noon :

And many patient souls 'neath Eng-
lish roofs

Have died like Romans. I, in look-
ing back,

Wish only, now, I had borne the
plague of all

With meeker spirits than were rife in
Rome.

For, on the sixth week, the dead sea
broke up,

Dashed suddenly through beneath the
heel of Him

Who stands upon the sea and earth,
and swears

Time shall be nevermore. The clock
struck nine

That morning, too,—no lark was out
of tune ;

The hidden farms among the hills,
breathed straight

Their smoke toward heaven ; the lime-
tree scarcely stirred

Beneath the blue weight of the cloud-
less sky,

Though still the July air came float-
ing through

The woodbine at my window, in and
out,

With touches of the out-door country
news

For a bending forehead. There I
sate, and wished

That morning-truce of God would last
till eve,

Or longer. "Sleep," I thought, "late
sleepers,—sleep,

And spare me yet, the burden of your
eyes."

Then, suddenly, a single ghastly
shriek

Tore upwards from the bottom of the
house.

Like one who wakens in a grave and
shrieke,

The still house seemed to shriek itself
alive,

And shudder through its passages
and stairs

With slam of doors and clash of bells,
—I sprang,

I stood up in the middle of the room,
And there confronted at my chamber-
door,

A white face,—shivering, ineffectual
lips.

"Come, come," they tried to utter,
and I went ;

As if a ghost had drawn me at the
point

Of a fiery finger through the uneven
dark,

I went with reeling footsteps down
the stair,

Nor asked a question.

There she sate, my aunt,—
Bolt upright in the chair beside her
bed,

Whose pillow had no dint ! she had
used no bed

For that night's sleeping . . . yet
slept well. My God,

The dumb derision of that grey,
peaked face

Concluded something grave against
the sun,

Which filled the chamber with its
July burst

When Susan drew the curtains, ignor-
ant

Of who sate open-eyed behind her.
There,

She sate . . . it sate . . . we said
"she" yesterday . . .

And held a letter with unbroken seal,
As Susan gave it to her hand last
night.

All night she had held it. If its news
referred

To duchies or to dunghills, not an
inch

She'd budge, 'twas obvious, for such
worthless odds :

Nor, though the stars were suns, and
overburned

Their spheric limitations, swallowing
up

Like wax the azure spaces, could they
force

Those open eyes to wink once. What
last sight

Had left them blank and flat so,—
drawing out

The faculty of vision from the roots,
As nothing more, worth seeing, re-
mained behind ?

Were those the eyes that watched me,
worried me ?

That dogged me up and down the
hours and days,

A beaten, breathless, miserable soul ?
And did I pray, a half-hour back, but
so,

To escape the burden of those eyes
. . . those eyes ?

"Sleep late" I said.—

Why now, indeed, they sleep.
God answers sharp and sudden on
some prayers,

And thrusts the thing we have prayed
for in our face,

A gauntlet with a gift in't. Every
wish

Is like a prayer . . . with God.

I had my wish,—
To read and meditate the thing I
would,

To fashion all my life upon my
thought,

And marry, or not marry. Hence-
forth, none

Could disapprove me, vex me, hamper
me.

Fall ground-room, in this desert
newly made,

For Babylon or Baalbec,—when the
breath,

Now choked with sand, returns, for
building towns !

The heir came over on the funeral
day,

And we two cousins met before the
dead,

With two pale faces. Was it death or
life

That moved us ? When the will was
read and done,

The official guest and witnesses with-
drawn,

We rose up in a silence almost hard,
And looked at one another. Then I
said,

"Farewell, my cousin."

But he torched, just touched
My hatstrings tied for going (at the
door

The carriage stood to take me), and
said low,

"Siste, viator."

"Is there time," I asked,

"In these last days of railroads, to
stop short

Like Cæsar's chariot (weighing half a
ton)

On the Appian road, for morals ? "

"There is time,"
He answered grave, "for necessary
words,

Inclusive, trust me, of no epitaph
On man or act, my cousin. We have
read

A will, which gives you all the per-
sonal goods

And funded monies of your aunt."

"I thank
Her memory for it. With three hun-
dred pounds

We buy in England even, clear stand-
ing-room"

To stand and work in. Only two
hours since,

I fancied I was poor."

"And, cousin, still
You're richer than you fancy. The
will says,

*Three hundred pounds, and any other
sum*

*Of which the said testatrix dies pos-
sessed.*

I say she died possessed of other
sums."

"Dear Romney, need we chronicle
the pence?

I'm richer than I thought—that's
evident.

Enough so."

"Listen rather. You've to do
With business and a cousin," he re-
sumed,

"And both, I fear, need patience.
Here's the fact.

The other sum (there is another sum,
Unspecified in any will which dates
After possession, yet bequeathed as
much

And clearly as those said three hun-
dred pounds)

Is thirty thousand. You will have it
paid

When? . . . where? My duty
troubles you with words."

He struck the iron when the bar was
hot;

No wonder if my eyes sent out some
sparks.

"Pause there! I thank you. You
are delicate

In glozing gifts;—but I, who share
your blood,

And rather made for giving, like
yourself,

Than taking, like your pensioners.
Farewell."

He stopped me with a gesture of
calm pride.

"A Leigh," he said, "gives largesse
and gives love,

But glozes neither: if a Leigh could
gloze,

He would not do it, moreover, to a
Leigh,

With blood trained up along nine
centuries

To hound and hate a lie, from eyes
like yours.

And now we'll make the rest as clear;
your aunt

Possessed these monies."

"You will make it clear,
My cousin, as the honour of us both,
Or one of us speaks vainly—that's
not I.

My aunt possessed this sum,—in-
herited

From whom, and when? bring docu-
ments, prove dates."

"Why now indeed you throw your
bonnet off,

As if you had time left for a logarithm!
The faith's the want. Dear cousin,

give me faith,
And you shall walk this road with

silken shoes,
As clean as any lady of our house

Supposed the proudest. Oh, I com-
prehend

The whole position from your point
of sight

I oust you from your father's halls
and lands,

And make you poor by getting rich—
that's law;

Considering which, in common cir-
cumstance,

You would not scruple to accept from
me

Some compensation, some sufficiency
Of income—that were justice; but,
alas,

I love you . . . that's mere nature!—
you reject

My love . . . that's nature also;—
and at once,

You cannot, from a suitor disal-
lowed,

A hand thrown back as mine is, into
yours

Receive a doit, a farthing, . . . not
for the world!

That's etiquette with women, obvi-
ously

Exceeding claim of nature, law, and
right,

Unanswerable to all. I grant, you
see,

The case as you conceive it,—leave
you room

To sweep your ample skirts of
womanhood;

While, standing humbly squeezed
against the wall,

I own myself excluded from being
just,

Restrained from paying indubitable
debts,

Because denied from giving you my
soul—

That's my misfortune!—I submit
to it

As if, in some more reasonable age,
'Twould not be less inevitable.
Enough.

You'll trust me, cousin, as a gentleman,
To keep your honour, as you count it, pure,—
Your scruples (just as if I thought them wise)
Safe and inviolate from gifts of mine."

I answered mild but earnest. "I believe

In no one's honour which another keeps,

Nor man's nor woman's. As I keep, myself,

My truth and my religion, I depute No father, though I had one this side death,

Nor brother, though I had twenty, much less you,

Though twice my cousin, and once Romney Leigh,

To keep my honour pure. You face, to-day,

A man who wants instruction, mark me, not

A woman who wants protection. As to a man,

Show manhood, speak out plainly, be precise

With facts and dates. My aunt inherited

This sum, you say—"

"I said she died possessed Of this, dear cousin."

"Not by heritage. Thank you : we're getting to the facts at last.

Perhaps she played at commerce with a ship

Which came in heavy with Australian gold ?

Or touched a lottery with her finger-end,

Which tumbled on a sudden into her lap

Some old Rhine tower or principality ? Perhaps she had to do with a marine

Sub-transatlantic railroad, which pre- pays

As well as pre-supposes ? or perhaps Some stale ancestral debt was after- paid

By a hundred years, and took her by surprise ?—

You shake your head, my cousin ; I guess ill."

"You need not guess, Aurora, nor deride,—

The truth is not afraid of hurting you. You'll find no cause, in all your

scruples, why

Your aunt should cavil at a deed of gift

"Twixt her and me."

"I thought so—ah ! a gift."

"You naturally thought so," he resumed.

"A very natural gift."

"A gift, a gift ! Her individual life being stranded high

Above all want, approaching opulence, Too haughty was she to accept a gift

Without some ultimate aim : ah, ah, I see,—

A gift intended plainly for her heirs, And so accepted . . . if accepted . . .

ah, Indeed that might be ; I am snared

perhaps, Just so. But, cousin, shall I pardon

you, If thus you have caught me with a

cruel springe ?" He answered gently, "Need you

tremble and pant Like a netted lioness ? is't my fault,

mine, That you're a grand wild creature of

the woods, And hate the stall built for you ? Any

way, Though triply netted, need you glare

at me ? I do not hold the cords of such a net ;

You're free from me, Aurora !"

"Now may God Deliver me from this strait ! This gift

of yours Was tendered . . . when ? accepted

. . . when ?" I asked.

"A month . . . a fortnight since ? Six weeks ago

It was not tendered. By a word she dropped,

I know it was not tendered nor received.

When was it ? Bring your dates."

"What matters when ? A half-hour ere she died, or a half-year, Secured the gift, maintains the herit-

age

Inviolable with law. As easy pluck
The golden stars from heaven's embroidered stole,
To pin them on the grey side of this earth,
As make you poor again, thank God."

"Not poor
Nor clean again from henceforth, you thank God ?

Well, sir—I ask you . . . I insist at need, . . .

Vouchsafe the special date, the special date."

"The day before her death-day," he replied,

"The gift was in her hands. We'll find that deed,

And certify that date to you."

As one
Who has climbed a mountain-height and carried up

His own heart climbing, panting in his throat

With the toil of the ascent, takes breath at last,

Looks back in triumph—so I stood and looked :

"Dear cousin Romney, we have reached the top

Of this steep question, and may rest, I think.

But first,—I pray you pardon, that the shock

And surge of natural feeling and event

Had made me oblivious of acquainting you

That this, this letter . . . unread, mark,—still sealed,

Was found enfolded in the poor dead hand :

That spirit of hers had gone beyond the address,

Which could not find her though you wrote it clear,—

I know your writing, Romney,—recognise

The open-hearted A, the liberal sweep Of the G. Now listen,—let us understand ;

You will not find that famous deed of gift,

Unless you find it in the letter here, Which, not being mine, I give you back.—Refuse

To take the letter ? well then—you and I,

As writer and as heiress, open it Together, by your leave.—Exactly so :

The words in which the noble offering's made,

Are nobler still, my cousin ; and, I own,

The proudest and most delicate heart alive,

Distracted from the measure of the gift

By such a grace in giving, might accept

Your largesse without thinking any more

Of the burthen of it, than King Solomon

Considered, when he wore his holy ring Charactered over with the ineffable spell,

How many carats of fine gold made up Its money-value. So, Leigh gives to

Leigh—

Or rather, might have given, observe ! —for that's

The point we come to. Here's a proof of gift,

But here's no proof, sir, of acceptancy, But rather, disproof. Death's black

dust, being blown,

Infiltrated through every secret fold Of this sealed letter by a puff of

fate,

Dried up for ever the fresh-written ink, Annulled the gift, disutilised the grace,

And left these fragments."

As I spoke, I tore The paper up and down, and down

and up

And crosswise, till it fluttered from my hands,

As forest-leaves, stripped suddenly and rapt

By a whirlwind on Valdarno, drop again,

Drop slow, and strew the melancholy ground

Before the amazed hills . . . why, so, indeed,

I'm writing like a poet, somewhat large

In the type of the image,—and exaggerate

A small thing with a great thing, topping it !—

But then I'm thinking how his eyes
 looked . . . his,
 With what despondent and surprised
 reproach !
 I think the tears were in them, as he
 looked—
 I think the manly mouth just trem-
 bled. Then
 He broke the silence.
 "I may ask, perhaps,
 Although no stranger . . . only
 Romney Leigh,
 Which means still less . . . than
 Vincent Carrington . . .
 Your plans in going hence, and where
 you go.
 This cannot be a secret."
 "All my life
 Is open to you, cousin. I go hence
 To London, to the gathering-place of
 souls,
 To live mine straight out, vocally, in
 books ;
 Harmoniously for others, if indeed
 A woman's soul, like man's, be wide
 enough
 To carry the whole octave (that's to
 prove)
 Or, if I fail, still, purely for myself.
 Pray God be with me, Romney."
 "Ah, poor child,
 Who fight against the mother's 'tiring
 hand,
 And choose the headsman's ! May
 God change His world
 For your sake, sweet, and make it
 mild as heaven,
 And juster than I have found you !"
 But I paused.
 "And you, my cousin ?"—
 "I," he said,—"you ask ?
 You care to ask ? Well, girls have
 curious minds,
 And fain would know the end of
 everything,
 Of cousins, therefore, with the rest.
 For me,
 Aurora, I've my work ; you know my
 work ;
 And, having missed this year some
 personal hope,
 I must beware the rather that I miss
 No reasonable duty. While you
 sing
 Your happy pastorals of the meads
 and trees,
 Bethink you that I go to impress and
 prove
 On stifled brains and deafened ears,
 stunned deaf,
 Crushed dull with grief, that nature
 sings itself,
 And needs no mediate poet, lute or
 voice,
 To make it vocal. While you ask of
 men
 Your audience, I may get their leave
 perhaps
 For hungry orphans to say audibly
 'We're hungry, see,'—for beaten and
 bullied wives
 To hold their unweaned babies up in
 sight,
 Whom orphanage would better ; and
 for all
 To speak and claim their portion . . .
 by no means
 Of the soil, . . . but of the sweat in
 tilling it,—
 Since this is now-a-days turned
 privilege,
 To have only God's curse on us, and
 not man's.
 Such work I have for doing, elbow-
 deep
 In social problems,—as you tie your
 rhymes,
 To draw my uses to cohere with
 needs,
 And bring the uneven world back to
 its round ;
 Or, failing so much, fill up, bridge at
 least
 To smother issues, some abysmal
 cracks
 And feuds of earth, intestine heats
 have made
 To keep men separate,—using sorry
 shifts
 Of hospitals, almshouses, infant
 schools,
 And other practical stuff of partial
 good,
 You lovers of the beautiful and whole.
 Despise by system."
 "I despise ? The scorn
 Is yours, my cousin. Poets become
 such,
 Through scorning nothing. You de-
 cry them for
 The good of beauty, sung and taught
 by them,

While they respect your practical
 partial good
 As being a part of beauty's self.
 Adieu !
 When God helps all the workers for
 His world,
 The singers shall have help of Him,
 not last."

He smiled as men smile when they will
 not speak
 Because of something bitter in the
 thought ;
 And still I feel his melancholy eyes
 Look judgment on me. It is seven
 years since :
 I know not if 'twas pity or 'twas scorn
 Has made them so far-reaching :
 judge it ye
 Who have had to do with pity more
 than love,
 And scorn than hatred. I am used,
 since then,
 To other ways, from equal men. But
 so,
 Even so, we let go hands, my cousin
 and I,
 And, in between us, rushed the torrent-
 world
 To blanch our faces like divided rocks,
 And bar for ever mutual sight and
 touch
 Except through swirl of spray and all
 that roar.

THIRD BOOK

" To-day thou girdest up thy loins
 thyself,
 And goest where thou wouldest : pre-
 sently
 Others shall gird thee," said the Lord,
 " to go
 Where thou wouldest not." He spoke
 to Peter thus,
 To signify the death which he should
 die
 When crucified head downwards.
 If He spoke
 To Peter then, He speaks to us the
 same ;
 The word suits many different martyr-
 doms,
 And signifies a multiform of death,
 Although we scarcely die apostles, we,
 And have mislaid the keys of heaven
 and earth.

For 'tis not in mere death that men
 die most ;
 And, after our first girding of the loins
 In youth's fine linen and fair broiery,
 To run up hill and meet the rising sun,
 We are apt to sit tired, patient as a
 fool,
 While others gird us with the violent
 bands
 Of social figments, feints, and for-
 malisms,
 Reversing our straight nature, lifting
 up
 Our base needs, keeping down our
 lofty thoughts,
 Head downward on the cross-sticks of
 the world.

Yet He can pluck us from that shame-
 ful cross.
 God, set our feet low and our forehead
 high,
 And show us how a man was made to
 walk !

Leave the lamp, Susan, and go up to
 bed.
 The room does very well ; I have to
 write
 Beyond the stroke of midnight. Get
 away ;
 Your steps, for ever buzzing in the
 room,
 Tease me like gnats. Ah, letters !
 throw them down
 At once, as I must have them, to be
 sure,
 Whether I bid you never bring me
 such
 At such an hour, or bid you. No
 excuse.
 You choose to bring them, as I choose
 perhaps
 To throw them in the fire. Now, get
 to bed,
 And dream, if possible, I am not cross.

Why what a pettish, petty thing I
 grow,—
 A mere, mere woman,—a mere
 flaccid nerve,—
 A kerchief left out all night in the rain,
 Turned soft so,—overtasked and over-
 strained
 And overlived in this close London
 life !
 And yet I should be stronger.

Never burn
 Your letters, poor Aurora! for they
 stare
 With red seals from the table, saying
 each,
 "Here's something that you know
 not." Out alas,
 'Tis scarcely that the world's more
 good and wise
 Or even straighter and more conse-
 quent
 Since yesterday at this time—yet,
 again,
 If but one angel spoke from Ararat,
 I should be very sorry not to hear:
 So open all the letters! let me read.
 Blanche Ord, the writer in the "Lady's
 Fan,"
 Requests my judgment on . . . that,
 afterwards.
 Kate Ward desires the model of my
 cloak,
 And signs, "Elisha to you." Pringle
 Sharpe
 Presents his work on "Social Con-
 duct," . . . craves
 A little money for his pressing
 debts . . .
 From me, who scarce have money for
 my needs,—
 Art's fiery chariot which we journey in
 Being apt to singe our singing-rob-
 es to holes,
 Although you ask me for my cloak,
 Kate Ward!
 Here's Rudgely knows it—editor and
 scribe,—
 He's forced to marry where his heart
 is not,
 Because the purse lacks where he lost
 his heart.
 Ah,—lost it because no one picked it
 up!
 That's really loss! (and passable im-
 pudence.)
 My critic Hammond flatters prettily,
 And wants another volume like the
 last.
 My critic Belfair wants another book
 Entirely different, which will sell (and
 live?),
 A striking book, yet not a startling
 book,
 The public blames originalities
 (You must not pump spring-water
 unawares

Upon a gracious public, full of
 nerves—)
 Good things, not subtle, new yet
 orthodox,
 As easy reading as the dog-eared page
 That's fingered by said public, fifty
 years,
 Since first taught spelling by its grand-
 mother,
 And yet a revelation in some sort:
 That's hard, my critic Belfair! So—
 what next?
 My critic Stokes objects to abstract
 thoughts;
 "Call a man, John, a woman, Joan,"
 says he,
 "And do not prate so of humanities:"
 Whereat I call my critic, simply
 Stokes.
 My critic Jobson recommends more
 mirth,
 Because a cheerful genius suits the
 times,
 And all true poets laugh unquench-
 ably
 Like Shakspeare and the gods. That's
 very hard.
 The gods may laugh, and Shakspeare;
 Dante smiled
 With such a needy heart on two pale
 lips,
 We cry, "Weep rather, Dante."
 Poems are
 Men, if true poems: and who dares
 exclaim
 At any man's door, "Here, 'tis prob-
 able
 The thunder fell last week, and killed
 a wife,
 And scared a sickly husband—what
 of that?
 Get up, be merry, shout, and clap your
 hands,
 Because a cheerful genius suits the
 times—"?
 None says so to the man,—and why
 indeed
 Should any to the poem? A ninth
 seal;
 The apocalypse is drawing to a close.
 Ha,—this from Vincent Carrington,—
 "Dear friend,
 I want good counsel. Will you lend
 me wings
 To raise me to the subject, in a
 sketch

I'll bring to-morrow—may I ? at eleven ?

A poet's only born to turn to use ;
So save you ! for the world . . . and Carrington."

"(Writ after.) Have you heard of Romney Leigh,

Beyond what's said of him in newspapers,

His phalansteries there, his speeches here,

His pamphlets, pleas, and statements, everywhere ?

He dropped *me* long ago ; but no one drops

A golden apple—though indeed, one day,

You hinted that, but jested. Well, at least,

You know Lord Howe, who sees him . . . whom he sees,

And *you* see, and I hate to see,—for Howe

Stands high upon the brink of theories, Observes the swimmers, and cries

'Very fine,' But keeps dry linen equally,—unlike That gallant breaster, Romney.

Strange it is, Such sudden madness seizing a young man,

To make earth over again,—while I'm content

To make the pictures. Let me bring the sketch.

A tiptoe Danae, overbold and hot ; Both arms a-flame to meet her wishing Jove

Halfway, and burn him faster down ; the face

And breasts upturned and straining, the loose locks

All glowing with the anticipated gold. Or here's another on the self-same theme.

She lies here—flat upon her prison-floor,

The long hair swathed about her to the heel,

Like wet sea-weed. You dimly see her through

The glittering haze of that prodigious rain,

Half blotted out of nature by a love As heavy as fate. I'll bring you either sketch,

I think, myself, the second indicates More passion."

Surely. Self is put away, And calm with abdication. She is Jove,

And no more Danae—greater thus. Perhaps

The painter symbolises unawares Two states of the recipient artist-soul ;

One, forward, personal, wanting reverence,

Because aspiring only. We'll be calm, And know that, when indeed our Joves come down,

We all turn stiller than we have ever been.

Kind Vincent Carrington. I'll let him come.

He talks of Florence,—and may say a word

Of something as it chanced seven years ago,—

A hedgehog in the path, or a lame bird,

In those green country walks, in that good time,

When certainly I was so miserable . . . I seem to have missed a blessing ever since.

The music soars within the little lark, And the lark soars. It is not thus with men.

We do not make our places with our strains,—

Content, while they rise, to remain behind,

Alone on earth instead of so in heaven. No matter—I bear on my broken tale.

When Romney Leigh and I had parted thus,

I took a chamber up three flights of stairs

Not far from being as steep as some larks climb,

And, in a certain house in Kensington, Three years I lived and worked. Get leave to work

In this world,—'tis the best you get at all ;

For God, in cursing, gives us better gifts

Than men in benediction. God says, "Sweat

For foreheads ; " men say " crowns ; " and so we are crowned,—
 Ay, gashed by some tormenting circle of steel
 Which snaps with a secret spring. Get work, get work ;
 Be sure 'tis better than what you work to get.

Serene and unafraid of solitude,
 I worked the short days out,—and watched the sun
 On lurid morns, or monstrous afternoons,
 Like some Druidic idol's fiery brass,
 With fixed unflickering outline of dead heat,
 In which the blood of wretches pent inside
 Seemed oozing forth to incarnadine the air,—
 Push out through fog with his dilated disc
 And startle the slant roofs and chimney-pots
 With splashes of fierce colour. Or I saw
 Fog only, the great tawny weltering fog,
 Involve the passive city, strangle it
 Alive, and draw it off into the void,
 Spires, bridges, streets, and squares, as if a sponge
 Had wiped out London,—or as noon and night
 Had clapped together and utterly struck out
 The intermediate time, undoing themselves
 In the act. Your city poets see such things,
 Not despicable. Mountains of the south,
 When, drunk and mad with elemental wines,
 They rend the seamless mist and stand up bare,
 Make fewer singers, haply. No one sings,
 Descending Sinai : on Parnassus mount,
 You take a mule to climb, and not a muse,
 Except in fable and figure : forests chant

Their anthems to themselves, and leave you dumb.
 But sit in London, at the day's decline,
 And view the city perish in the mist
 Like Pharaoh's armaments in the deep Red Sea,—
 The chariots, horsemen, footmen, all the host,
 Sucked down and choked to silence—then, surprised
 By a sudden sense of vision and of tune,
 You feel as conquerors though you did not fight,
 And you and Israel's other singing girls,
 Ay, Miriam with them, sing the song you choose.

I worked with patience which means almost power.
 I did some excellent things indifferently,
 Some bad things excellently. Both were praised,
 The latter loudest. And by such a time
 That I myself had set them down as sins
 Scarce worth the price of sackcloth, week by week,
 Arrived some letter through the sedulous post,
 Like these I've read, and yet dissimilar,
 With pretty maiden seals,—initials twined
 Of lilies, or a heart marked *Emily* !
 (Convicting Emily of being all heart) ;
 Or rarer tokens from young bachelors,
 Who wrote from college (with the same goosequill,
 Suppose, they had just been plucked of) and a snatch
 From Horace, " Collegisse juvat," set
 Upon the first page. Many a letter signed
 Or unsigned, showing the writers at eighteen
 Had lived too long, though every muse should help
 The daylight, holding candles,—compliments,
 To smile or sigh at. Such could pass with me

No more than coins from Moscow
 circulate
 At Paris. Would ten roubles buy a
 tag
 Of ribbon on the boulevard, worth a
 sou ?
 I smiled that all this youth should
 love me,—sighed
 That such a love could scarcely raise
 them up
 To love what was more worthy than
 myself ;
 Then sighed again, again, less gener-
 ously,
 To think the very love they lavished
 so,
 Proved me inferior. The strong loved
 me not,
 And he . . . my cousin Romney . . .
 did not write.
 I felt the silent finger of his scorn
 Prick every bubble of my frivolous
 fame
 As my breath blew it, and resolve it
 back
 To the air it came from. Oh, I justi-
 fied
 The measure he had taken of my
 height :
 The thing was plain—he was not
 wrong a line ;
 I played at art, made thrusts with a
 toy-sword,
 Amused the lads and maidens.
 Came a sigh
 Deep, hoarse with resolution,—I
 would work
 To better ends, or play in earnest.
 “Heavens,
 I think I should be almost popular
 If this went on !”—I ripped my
 verses up,
 And found no blood upon the rapier’s
 point ;
 The heart in them was just an em-
 bryo’s heart,
 Which never yet had beat, that it
 should die ;
 Just gasps of make-believe galvanic
 life ;
 Mere tones, inorganised to any tune.

And yet I felt it in me where it burnt,
 Like those hot fire-seeds of creation
 held

In Jove’s clenched palm before the
 worlds were sown,—
 But I—I was not Juno even ! my
 hand
 Wasshut in weak convulsion, woman’s
 ill,
 And when I yearned to loose a finger
 —lo,
 The nerve revolted. ’Tis the same
 even now :
 This hand may never, haply, open
 large,
 Before the spark is quenched, or the
 palm charred,
 To prove the power not else than by
 the pain.

It burns, it burnt—my whole life
 burnt with it,
 And light, not sunlight and not torch-
 light, flashed
 My steps out through the slow and
 difficult road.
 I had grown distrustful of too forward
 Springs,
 The season’s books in drear significance
 Of morals, dropping round me. Lively
 books ?
 The ash has livelier verdure than the
 yew ;
 And yet the yew’s green longer, and
 alone
 Found worthy of the holy Christmas
 time.
 We’ll plant more yews if possible,
 albeit
 We plant the graveyards with them.
 Day and night
 I worked my rhythmic thought, and
 furrowed up
 Both watch and slumber with long
 lines of life
 Which did not suit their season. The
 rose fell
 From either cheek, my eyes globed
 luminous
 Through orbits of blue shadow, and
 my pulse
 Would shudder along the purple-
 veined wrist
 Like a shot bird. Youth’s stern, set
 face to face
 With youth’s ideal : and when people
 came
 And said, “ You work too much, you
 are looking ill,”

I smiled for pity of them who pitied
me,
And thought I should be better soon
perhaps
For those ill looks. Observe—"I"
means in youth
Just I . . . the conscious and eternal
soul
With all its ends, and not the outside
life,
The parcel-man, the doublet of the
flesh,
The so much liver, lung, integument,
Which make the sum of "I" here-
after, when
World-talkers talk of doing well or
ill.
I prosper, if I gain a step, although
A nail then pierced my foot : although
my brain
Embracing any truth, froze paralysed,
I prosper. I but change my instru-
ment ;
I break the spade off, digging deep for
gold,
And catch the mattock up.
I worked on, on.
Through all the bristling fence of nights
and days
Which hedges time in from the eterni-
ties,
I struggled, . . . never stopped to
note the stakes
Which hurt me in my course. The
midnight oil
Would stink sometimes ; there came
some vulgar needs :
I had to live, that therefore I might
work,
And, being but poor, I was con-
strained, for life,
To work with one hand for the book-
sellers,
While working with the other for my-
self
And art. You swim with feet as well
as hands,
Or make small way. I apprehended
this,—
In England, no one lives by verse that
lives ;
And, apprehending, I resolved by
prose
To make a space to sphere my living
verse.
I wrote for cyclopædias, magazines,

And weekly papers, holding up my
name
To keep it from the mud. I learnt
the use
Of the editorial "we" in a review,
As courtly ladies the fine trick of
trains,
And swept it grandly through the open
doors
As if one could not pass through doors
at all
Save so encumbered. I wrote tales
beside,
Carved many an article on cherry-
stones
To suit light readers,—something in
the lines
Revealing, it was said, the mallet-
hand,
But that, I'll never vouch for. What
you do
For bread, will taste of common grain,
not grapes,
Although you have a vineyard in
Champagne,—
Much less in Nephelococcygia,
As mine was, peradventure.
Having bread
For just so many days, just breathing
room
For body and verse, I stood up
straight and worked
My veritable work. And as the soul
Which grows within a child, makes
the child grow,—
Or as the fiery sap, the touch from
God,
Careering through a tree, dilates the
bark,
And roughs with scale and knob, before
it strikes
The summer foliage out in a green
flame—
Solife, in deepening with me, deepened
all
The course I took, the work I did. In-
deed,
The academic law convinced of
sin ;
The critics cried out on the falling off,
Regretting the first manner. But I felt
My heart's life throbbing in my verse
to show
It lived, it also—certes, incomplete,
Disordered with all Adam in the
blood,

But even its very tumours, warts, and
wens,
Still organised by, and implying life.

A lady called upon me on such a day.
She had the low voice of your English
dames,

Unused, it seems, to need rise half a note
To catch attention,—and their quiet
mood,

As if they lived too high above the
earth

For that to put them out in anything :
So gentle, because verily so proud ;
So wary and afeared of hurting you,
By no means that you are not really
vile,

But that they would not touch you
with their foot

To push you to your place ; so self-
possessed

Yet gracious and conciliating, it takes
An effort in their presence to speak
truth :

You know the sort of woman,—bril-
liant stuff,

And out of nature. " Lady Walde-
mar."

She said her name quite simply, as if
it meant

Not much indeed, but something,—
took my hands,

And smiled, as if her smile could help
my case,

And dropped her eyes on me, and let
them melt.

" Is this," she said, " the Muse ? "
" No sybil even,"

I answered, " since she fails to guess
the cause

Which taxed you with this visit,
madam."

" Good,"

She said, " I like to be sincere at once ;
Perhaps, if I had found a literal Muse,
The visit might have taxed me. As
it is,

You wear your blue so chiefly in your
eyes,

My fair Aurora, in a frank good way,
It comforts me entirely for your fame,
As well as for the trouble of my ascent
To this Olympus."

There, a silver laugh
Ran rippling through her quickened
little breaths

The steep stair somewhat justified.
" But still
Your ladyship has left me curious why
You dared the risk of finding the said
Muse ? "

" Ah,—keep me, notwithstanding, to
the point,

Like any pedant ? Is the blue in eyes
As awful as in stockings, after all,
I wonder, that you'd have my business
out

Before I breathe—exact the epic
plunge

In spite of gasps ? Well, naturally you
think

I've come here, as the lion-hunters go
To deserts, to secure you, with a trap,
For exhibition in my drawing-rooms
On zoologic soirées ? Not in the
least.

Roar softly at me ; I am frivolous,
I dare say ; I have played at lions, too,
Like other women of my class,—but
now

I meet my lion simply as Androcles
Met his . . . when at his mercy."

So, she bent
Her head, as queens may mock,—then
lifting up

Her eyelids with a real grave queenly
look,

Which ruled, and would not spare, not
even herself,—

" I think you have a cousin :—Rom-
ney Leigh."

" You bring a word from *him* ?"—
my eyes leapt up

To the very height of hers,—*" a word
from him ? "*

" I bring a word about him, actually.
But first,"—she pressed me with her
urgent eyes—

" You do not love him,—you ? "
" You're frank at least

In putting questions, madam," I
replied ;

" I love my cousin cousinly—no more."

" I guessed as much. I'm ready to
be frank

In answering also, if you'll question
me,

Or even with something less. You
stand outside,

You artist women, of the common sex ;

You share not with us, and exceed us
 so
 Perhaps by what you're mulcted in,
 your hearts
 Being starved to make your heads :
 so run the old
 Traditions of you. I can therefore
 speak,
 Without the natural shame which
 creatures feel
 When speaking on their level, to their
 like.
 There's many a papist she, would
 rather die
 Than own to her maid she put a
 ribbon on
 To catch the indifferent eye of such a
 man,—
 Who yet would count adulteries on
 her beads
 At holy Mary's shrine, and never
 blush ;
 Because the saints are so far off, we
 lose
 All modesty before them. Thus, to-
 day.
 'Tis I, love Romney Leigh."
 "Forbear," I cried.
 "If here's no Muse, still less is any
 saint ;
 Nor even a friend, that Lady Walde-
 mar
 Should make confessions " . . .
 "That's unkindly said.
 If no friend, what forbids to make a
 friend
 To join to our confession ere we have
 done ?
 I love your cousin. If it seems un-
 wise
 To say so, it's still foolisher (we're
 frank)
 To feel so. My first husband left me
 young,
 And pretty enough, so please you, and
 rich enough,
 To keep my booth in Mayfair with
 the rest
 To happy issues. There are marquises
 Would serve seven years to call me
 wife, I know :
 And, after seven, I might consider it,
 For there's some comfort in a mar-
 quisate
 When all's said,—yes, but after the
 seven years ;

I, now, love Romney. You put up
 your lip,
 So like a Leigh ! so like him !—Pardon
 me,
 I am well aware I do not derogate
 In loving Romney Leigh. The name
 is good,
 The means are excellent ; but the
 man, the man—
 Heaven help us both,—I am near as
 mad as he,
 In loving such an one."
 She slowly swung
 Her heavy ringlets till they touched
 her smile,
 As reasonably sorry for herself ;
 And thus continued,—
 "Of a truth, Miss Leigh,
 I have not, without struggle, come to
 this.
 I took a master in the German tongue,
 I gamed a little, went to Paris twice ;
 But, after all, this love ! . . . you eat
 of love,
 And do as vile a thing as if you ate
 Of garlic—which, whatever else you
 eat,
 Tastes uniformly acrid, till your peach
 Reminds you of your onion. Am I
 coarse ?
 Well, love's coarse, nature's coarse—
 ah, there's the rub !
 We fair fine ladies, who park out our
 lives
 From common sheep-paths, cannot
 help the crows
 From flying over,—we're as natural
 still
 As Blowsalinda. Drape us perfectly
 In Lyons velvet,—we are not, for
 that,
 Lay-figures, look you ! we have hearts
 within,
 Warm, live, improvident, indecent
 hearts,
 As ready for distracted ends and acts
 As any distressed sempstress of them
 all
 That Romney groans and toils for.
 We catch love
 And other fevers, in the vulgar way.
 Love will not be outwitted by our
 wit,
 Nor outrun by our equipages :—mine
 Persisted, spite of efforts. All my
 cards

Turned up but Romney Leigh ; my
 German stopped
 At germane Wertherism ; my Paris
 rounds
 Returned me from the Champs Ely-
 sées just
 A ghost, and sighing like Dido's. I
 came home
 Uncured,—convicted rather to myself
 Of being in love . . . in love ! That's
 coarse you'll say.
 I'm talking garlic."

Coldly I replied.
 "Apologise for atheism, not love !
 For me, I do believe in love, and God.
 I know my cousin : Lady Waldemar
 I know not : yet I say as much as this—
 Whoever loves him, let her not excuse
 But cleanse herself, that, loving such
 a man,
 She may not do it with such unworthy
 love
 He cannot stoop and take it."

"That is said
 Austerely, like a youthful propheticess,
 Who knits her brows across her pretty
 eyes
 To keep them back from following the
 grey flight
 Of doves between the temple-columns.
 Dear,
 Be kinder with me. Let us two be
 friends.
 I'm a mere woman,—the more weak
 perhaps
 Through being so proud ; you're
 better ; as for him,
 He's best. Indeed he builds his good-
 ness up
 So high, it topples down to the other
 side,
 And makes a sort of badness ; there's
 the worst
 I have to say against your cousin's
 best !
 And so be mild, Aurora, with my
 worst,
 For his sake, if not mine."

"I own myself
 Incredulous of confidence like this
 Availing him or you."

"And I myself
 Of being worthy of him with any love.
 In your sense I am not so—let it pass.
 And yet I save him if I marry him ;
 Let that pass too."

"Pass, pass ! we play police
 Upon my cousin's life, to indicate
 What may or may not pass ?" I cried.

"He knows
 What's worthy of him ; the choice
 remains with *him* ;
 And what he chooses, act or wife, I
 think
 I shall not call unworthy, I, for one."

"'Tis somewhat rashly said," she
 answered slow.

"Now let's talk reason, though we
 talk of love.

Your cousin Romney Leigh's a mon-
 ster ; there,
 The word's out fairly ; let me prove
 the fact.

We'll take, say, that most perfect of
 antiques,

They call the 'Genius' of the Vatican,
 Which seems too beauteous to endure
 itself

In this mixed world, and fasten it for
 once

Upon the torso of the 'Drunken Faun'
 (Who might limp surely, if he did not
 dance),

Instead of Buonarroti's mask : what
 then ?

We show the sort of monster Romney
 is,

With godlike virtues and heroic aims
 Subjoined to limping possibilities
 Of misdeed human nature. Grant
 the man

Twice godlike, twice heroic,—still he
 limps,

And here's the point we come to."

"Pardon me,
 But, Lady Waldemar, the point's the
 thing
 We never come to."

"Caustic, insolent
 At need ! I like you"—(there, she
 took my hands)

"And now my lioness, help Androcles,
 For all your roaring. Help me ! for
 myself

I would not say so—but for him. He
 limps

So certainly, he'll fall into the pit
 A week hence,—so I lose him—so he
 is lost !

And when he's fairly married, he a
 Leigh,

To a girl of doubtful life, undoubtful
 birth,
 Starved out in London, till her coarse-
 grained hands
 Are whiter than her morals,—you, for
 one,
 May call his choice most worthy.”
 He . . . Romney ! ” “ Married ! lost !
 “ Ah, you’re moved at last,” she
 said.
 “ These monsters, set out in the open
 sun,
 Of course throw monstrous shadows :
 those who think
 Awry, will scarce act straightly. Who
 but he ?
 And who but you can wonder ? He
 has been mad,
 The whole world knows, since first,
 a nominal man,
 He soured the proctors, tried the
 gownsmen’s wits,
 With equal scorn of triangles and
 wine,
 And took no honours, yet was honour-
 able.
 They’ll tell you he lost count of
 Homer’s ships
 In Melbourne’s Poor-Bills, Ashley’s
 Factory Bills,—
 Ignored the Aspasia we all dare to
 praise,
 For other women, dear, we could not
 name
 Because we’re decent. Well, he had
 some right
 On his side probably ; men always
 have,
 Who go absurdly wrong. The living
 boor,
 Who brews your ale, exceeds in vital
 worth
 Dead Cæsar who ‘ stops bungholes ’ in
 the cask ;
 And also, to do good is excellent,
 For persons of his income, even to
 boors :
 I sympathise with all such things. But
 he
 Went mad upon them . . . madder
 and more mad,
 From college times to these,—as, going
 down hill,
 The faster still, the farther ! you must
 know

Your Leigh by heart : he has sown his
 black young curls
 With bleaching cares of half a million
 men
 Already. If you do not starve, or sin,
 You’re nothing to him. Pay the
 income-tax,
 And break your heart upon ’t . . .
 he’ll scarce be touched ;
 But come upon the parish, qualified
 For the parish stocks, and Romney
 will be there
 To call you brother, sister, or perhaps
 A tenderer name still. Had I any
 chance
 With Mister Leigh, who am Lady
 Waldemar,
 And never committed felony ? ”
 “ You speak
 Too bitterly,” I said, “ for the literal
 truth.”
 “ The truth is bitter. Here’s a man
 who looks
 For ever on the ground ! you must be
 low ;
 Or else a pictured ceiling overhead,
 Good painting thrown away. For me,
 I’ve done
 What women may (we’re somewhat
 limited,
 We modest women), but I’ve done my
 best.
 —How men are perjured when they
 swear our eyes
 Have meaning in them ! they’re just
 blue or brown,—
 They just can drop their lids a little.
 In fact,
 Mine did more, for I read half Fourier
 through,
 Proudhon, Considerant, and Louis
 Blanc,
 With various others of his socialists ;
 And if I had been a fathom less in love,
 Had cured myself with gaping. As it
 was,
 I quoted from them prettily enough,
 Perhaps, to make them sound half
 rational
 To a saner man than he, whene’er we
 talked,
 (For which I dodged occasion)—learnt
 by heart
 His speeches in the Commons and
 elsewhere

Upon the social question ; heaped reports

Of wicked women and penitentiaries,
On all my tables, with a place for Sue ;
And gave my name to swell subscription-lists

Toward keeping up the sun at nights
in heaven,

And other possible ends. All things
I did,

Except the impossible . . . such as
wearing gowns

Provided by the Ten Hours' movement ! there,

I stopped—we must stop somewhere.
He, meanwhile,

Unmoved as the Indian tortoise
'neath the world,

Let all that noise go on upon his back :
He would not disconcert or throw me
out ;

'Twas well to see a woman of my class
With such a dawn of conscience. For
the heart,

Made firewood for his sake, and flaming
up

To his very face . . . he warmed his
feet at it ;

But deigned to let my carriage stop
him short

In park or street,—he leaning on the
door,

With news of the committee which
sate last

On pickpockets at suck."
" You jest—you jest."

" As martyrs jest, dear (if you've
read their lives),

Upon the axe which kills them. When
all's done

By me, . . . for him—you'll ask him
presently

The colour of my hair—he cannot tell,
Or answers 'dark' at random,—
while, be sure,

He's absolute on the figure, five or ten,
Of my last subscription. Is it bear-
able,

And I a woman ? "

" Is it reparable,
Though I were a man ? "

" I know not. That's to prove.
But, first, this shameful marriage."

" Ay ? " I cried,
" Then really there's a marriage ? "

" Yesterday
I held him fast upon it. ' Mister Leigh,
Said I, ' shut up a thing, it makes
more noise.

The boiling town keeps secrets ill ;
I've known

Yours since last week. Forgive my
knowledge so :

You feel I'm not the woman of the
world

The world thinks ; you have borne
with me before,

And used me in your noble work,
our work,

And now you shall not cast me off
because

You're at the difficult point, the *join*.
'Tis true

Even I can scarce admit the cogency
Of such a marriage . . . where you
do not love

(Except the class), yet marry and
throw your name

Down to the gutter, for a fire-escape
To future generations ! it's sublime,

A great example,—a true Genesis
Of the opening social era. But take
heed ;

This virtuous act must have a patent
weight,

Or loses half its virtue. Make it tell,
Interpret it, and set in the light,

And do not muffle it in a winter-
cloak

As a vulgar bit of shame,—as if, at
best,

A Leigh had made a misalliance and
blushed

A Howard should know it. Then, I
pressed him more—

' He would not choose,' I said, ' that
even his kin, . . .

Aurora Leigh, even . . . should
conceive his act

Less sacrifice, more appetite.' At
which

He grew so pale, dear, . . . to the
lips, I knew

I had touched him. ' Do you know
her,' he inquired,

' My cousin Aurora ? ' ' Yes,' I said,
and lied

(But truly we all know you by your
books),

And so I offered to come straight to
you,

Explain the subject, justify the cause,
And take you with me to St. Margaret's
Court

To see this miracle, this Marian Erle,
This drover's daughter (she's not
pretty, he swears)

Upon whose finger, exquisitely pricked
By a hundred needles, we're to hang
the tie

'Twixt class and class in England,—
thus, in deed,

By such a presence, yours and mine,
to lift

The match up from the doubtful
place. At once

He thanked me, sighing . . . murmured
to himself,

'She'll do it perhaps; she's noble,'—
thanked me twice,

And promised, as my guerdon, to put
off

His marriage for a month."

I answered then.

"I understand your drift imperfectly.
You wish to lead me to my cousin's
betrothed,

To touch her hand if worthy, and hold
her hand

If feeble, thus to justify his match.
So be it then. But how this serves
your ends,

And how the strange confession of
your love

Serves this, I have to learn—I cannot
see."

She knit her restless forehead. "Then,
despite,

Aurora, that most radiant morning
name,

You're dull as any London afternoon.
I wanted time,—and gained it,—

wanted you,
And gain you! You will come and see
the girl,

In whose most prodigal eyes, the
lineal pearl

And pride of all your lofty race of
Leighs

Is destined to solution. Authorised
By sight and knowledge, then, you'll
speak your mind,

And prove to Romney, in your bril-
liant way,

He'll wrong the people and posterity

(Says such a thing is bad for you and me,
And you fail utterly,) by concluding
thus

An execrable marriage. Break it up,
Disroot it—peradventure, presently,
We'll plant a better fortune in its
place.

Be good to me, Aurora, scorn me less
For saying the thing I should not.

Well I know

I should not. I have kept, as others
have,

The iron rule of womanly reserve
In lip and life, till now: I wept a week

Before I came here."—Ending, she
was pale;

The last words, haughtily said, were
tremulous.

This palfrey pranced in harness,
arched her neck,

And, only by the foam upon the bit,
You saw she champed against it.

Then I rose.

"I love love: truth's no cleaner thing
than love.

I comprehend a love so fiery hot
It burns its natural veil of august
shame,

And stands sublimely in the nude, as
chaste

As Medicean Venus. But I know,
A love that burns through veils, will
burn through masks,

And shrivel up treachery. What,
love and lie!

Nay—go to the opera! your love's
curable."

"I love and lie?" she said—"I lie,
forsooth?"

And beat her taper foot upon the floor,
And smiled against the shoe.—

"You're hard, Miss Leigh,
Unversed in current phrases.—

Bowling-greens
Of poets are fresher than the world's
highways;

Forgive me that I rashly blew the dust
Which dims our hedges even, in your
eyes,

And vexed you so much. You find,
probably,

No evil in this marriage,—rather good
Of innocence, to pastoralise in song;

You'll give the bond your signature,
perhaps,

Beneath the lady's mark,—indifferent
 That Romney chose a wife, could write
 her name,
 In witnessing he loved her."
 "Loved!" I cried;
 "Who tells you that he wants a wife
 to love?
 He gets a horse to use, not love, I
 think:
 There's work for wives as well,—and
 after, straw,
 When men are liberal. For myself,
 you err
 Supposing power in me to break this
 match.
 I could not do it, to save Romney's
 life;
 And would not, to save mine."
 "You take it so,"
 She said; "farewell then. Write
 your books in peace,
 As far as may be for some secret stir
 Now obvious to me,—for, most ob-
 viously,
 In coming hither I mistook the way."
 Whereat she touched my hand, and
 bent her head,
 And floated from me like a silent
 cloud
 That leaves the sense of thunder.
 I drew breath,
 Oppressed in my deliverance. After
 all
 This woman breaks her social system
 up
 For love, so counted—the love pos-
 sible
 To such,—and lilies are still lilies,
 pulled
 Bysmuttery hands, though spotted from
 their white;
 And thus she is better, haply, of her
 kind,
 Than Romney Leigh, who lives by
 diagrams,
 And crosses out the spontaneities
 Of all his individual, personal life,
 With formal universals. As if man
 Were set upon a high stool at a desk,
 To keep God's books for Him, in red
 and black,
 And feel by millions! What, if even
 God
 Were chiefly God by living out Him-
 self
 To an individualism of the Infinite,

Eterne, intense, profuse,—still throw
 ing up
 The golden spray of multitudinous
 worlds
 In measure to the proclive weight and
 rush
 Of His inner nature,—the spontane-
 ous love
 Still proof and outflow of spontaneous
 life?
 Then live, Aurora!
 Two hours afterward,
 Within St. Margaret's Court I stood
 alone,
 Close-veiled. A sick child, from an
 ague-fit,
 Whose wasted right hand gambled
 'gainst his left
 With an old brass button, in a blot of
 sun,
 Jeered weakly at me as I passed across
 The uneven pavement; while a
 woman, rouged
 Upon the angular cheek-bones, ker-
 chief torn,
 Thin dangling locks, and flat lascivi-
 ous mouth,
 Cursed at a window, both ways, in
 and out,
 By turns some bed-ridden creature and
 myself,—
 "Lie still there, mother! liker the
 dead dog
 You'll be to-morrow. What, we pick
 our way,
 Fine madam, with those damnable
 small feet!
 We cover up our face from doing good,
 As if it were our purse! What brings
 you here,
 My lady? is't to find my gentleman
 Who visits his tame pigeon in the
 eaves?
 Our cholera catch you with its cramps
 and spasms,
 And tumble up your good clothes, veil
 and all,
 And turn your whiteness dead-blue."
 I looked up;
 I think I could have walked through
 hell that day,
 And never flinched. "The dear Christ
 comfort you,"
 I said, "you must have been most
 miserable
 To be so cruel,"—and I emptied out

My purse upon the stones : when, as I
 had cast
 The last charm in the cauldron, the
 whole court
 Went boiling, bubbling up, from all
 its doors
 And windows, with a hideous wail of
 laughs
 And roar of oaths, and blows perhaps
 . . . I passed
 Too quickly for distinguishing . . .
 and pushed
 A little side-door, hanging on a hinge,
 And plunged into the dark, and
 groped and climbed
 The long, steep, narrow stair 'twixt
 broken rail
 And mildewed wall that let the plaster
 drop
 To startle me in the blackness. Still,
 up, up!
 So high lived Romney's bride. I
 paused at last
 Before a low door in the roof, and
 knocked;
 There came an answer like a hurried
 dove—
 "So soon? can that be Mister Leigh?
 so soon?"
 And as I entered, an ineffable face
 Met mine upon the threshold. "Oh,
 not you,
 Not you!" . . . the dropping of the
 voice implied,
 "Then, if not you, for me not any
 one."
 I looked her in the eyes, and held her
 hands,
 And said, "I am his cousin,—Rom-
 ney Leigh's;
 And here I'm come to see my cousin
 too."
 She touched me with her face and
 with her voice,
 This daughter of the people. Such
 soft flowers,
 From such rough roots? the people,
 under there,
 Can sin so, curse so, look so, smell so
 . . . faugh!
 Yet have such daughters?
 Nowise beautiful
 Was Marian Erle. She was not white
 nor brown,
 But could look either, like a mist that
 changed

According to being shone on more or
 less.
 The hair, too, ran its opulence of curls
 In doubt 'twixt dark and bright, nor
 left you clear
 To name the colour. Too much hair
 perhaps
 (I'll name a fault here) for so small a
 head,
 Which seemed to droop on that side
 and on this,
 As a full-blown rose uneasy with its
 weight,
 Though not a breath should trouble
 it. Again,
 The dimple in the cheek had better
 gone
 With redder, fuller rounds : and some-
 what large
 The mouth was, though the milky
 little teeth
 Dissolved it to so infantine a smile!
 For soon it smiled at me; the eyes
 smiled too,
 But 'twas as if remembering they had
 wept,
 And knowing they should, some day,
 weep again.
 We talked. She told me all her
 story out,
 Which I'll re-tell with fuller utter-
 ance,
 As coloured and confirmed in after-
 times
 By others, and herself too. Marian
 Erle
 Was born upon the ledge of Malvern
 Hill
 To eastward, in a hut, built up at
 night
 To evade the landlord's eye, of mud
 and turf,
 Still liable, if once he looked that
 way,
 To being straight levelled, scattered
 by his foot,
 Like any other anthill. Born, I say;
 God sent her to His world, com-
 missioned right,
 Her human testimonials fully signed,
 Not scant in soul—complete in linea-
 ments;
 But others had to swindle her a place
 To wail in when she had come. No
 place for her,

By man's law ! born an outlaw, was
 this babe.
 Her first cry in our strange and strang-
 ling air,
 When cast in spasms out by the shud-
 dering womb,
 Was wrong against the social code,—
 forced wrong.
 What business had the baby to cry
 there ?
 I tell her story and grow passionate.
 She, Marian, did not tell it so, but
 used
 Meek words that made no wonder of
 herself
 For being so sad a creature. " Mister
 Leigh
 Considered truly that such things
 should change.
 They *will*, in heaven—but mean-
 time, on the earth,
 There's none can like a nettle as a
 pink,
 Except himself. We're nettles, some
 of us,
 And give offence by the act of spring-
 ing up
 And, if we leave the damp side of the
 wall,
 The hoes, of course, are on us." So
 she said.
 Her father earned his life by random
 jobs
 Despised by steadier workmen—
 keeping swine
 On commons, picking hops, or hurrying
 on
 The harvest at wet seasons,—or, at
 need,
 Assisting the Welsh drovers, when a
 drove
 Of startled horses plunged into the
 mist
 Below the mountain-road, and sowed
 the wind
 With wandering neighings. In be-
 tween the gaps
 Of such irregular work, he drank and
 slept,
 And cursed his wife because, the pence
 being out,
 She could not buy more drink. At
 which she turned
 (The worm) and beat her baby in re-
 venge,

For her own broken heart. There's
 not a crime
 But takes its proper change out still
 in crime,
 If once rung on the counter of this
 world ;
 Let sinners look to it.
 Yet the outcast child,
 For whom the very mother's face
 forewent
 The mother's special patience, lived
 and grew ;
 Learnt early to cry low, and walk
 alone,
 With that pathetic vacillating
 roll
 Of the infant body on the uncertain
 feet
 (The earth being felt unstable ground
 so soon),
 At which most women's arms unclosed
 at once
 With irrepressible instinct. Thus, at
 three,
 This poor weaned kid would run off
 from the fold,
 This babe would steal off from the
 mother's chair,
 And, creeping through the golden
 walls of gorse,
 Would find some keyhole toward the
 secrecy
 Of Heaven's high blue, and, nestling
 down, peer out—
 Oh, not to catch the angels at their
 games,
 She had never heard of angels,—but
 to gaze
 She knew not why, to see she knew
 not what,
 A-hungering outward from the barren
 earth
 For something like a joy. She liked,
 she said,
 To dazzle black her sight against the
 sky,
 For then, it seemed, some grand blind
 Love came down,
 And groped her out, and clasped her
 with a kiss ;
 She learnt God that way, and was
 beat for it
 Whenever she went home,—yet came
 again,
 As surely as the trapped hare, getting
 free,

Returns to his form. This grand
 blind Love, she said,
 This skyey father and mother both in
 one,
 Instructed her and civilised her more
 Than even the Sunday-school did
 afterward,
 To which a lady sent her to learn
 books
 And sit upon a long bench in a row
 With other children. Well, she
 laughed sometimes
 To see them laugh and laugh, and moil
 their texts;
 But offer she was sorrowful with
 noise,
 And wondered if their mothers beat
 them hard,
 That ever they should laugh so. There
 was one
 She loved indeed,—Rose Bell, a seven
 years' child
 So pretty and clever, who read syl-
 lables
 When Marian was at letters; *she*
 would laugh
 At nothing—hold your finger up, she
 laughed,
 Then shook her curls down on her
 eyes and mouth
 To hide her make-mirth from the
 schoolmaster.
 And Rose's pelting glee, as frank as
 rain
 On cherry-blossoms, brightened
 Marian too,
 To see another merry whom she
 loved.
 She whispered once (the children side
 by side,
 With mutual arms entwined about
 their necks)
 "Your mother lets you laugh so?"
 "Ay," said Rose,
 "She lets me. She was dug into the
 ground
 Six years since, I being but a yearling
 wean.
 Such mothers let us play and lose our
 time,
 And never scold nor beat us! don't
 you wish
 You had one like that?" There,
 Marian breaking off
 Looked suddenly in my face. "Poor
 Rose," said she,

"I heard her laugh last night in Ox-
 ford Street.
 I'd pour out half my blood to stop
 that laugh,—
 Poor Rose, poor Rose!" said Marian.
 She resumed.
 It tried her, when she had learnt at
 Sunday-school
 What God was, what He wanted from
 us all,
 And how, in choosing sin, we vexed
 the Christ,
 To go straight home and hear her
 father pull
 The Name down on us from the
 thunder-shelf,
 Then drink away his soul into the
 dark
 From seeing judgment. Father,
 mother, home,
 Were God and Heaven reversed to her:
 the more
 She knew of Right, the more she
 guessed their wrong;
 Her price paid down for knowledge,
 was to know
 The vileness of her kindred: through
 her heart,
 Her filial and tormented heart, hence-
 forth,
 They struck their blows at virtue.
 Oh, 'tis hard
 To learn you have a Father up in
 Heaven
 By a gathering certain sense of being,
 on earth,
 Still worse than orphaned: 'tis too
 heavy a grief,
 The having to thank God for such a
 joy!
 And so passed Marian's life from year
 to year.
 Her parents took her with them when
 they tramped,
 Dodged lanes and heaths, frequented
 towns and fairs,
 And once went farther and saw Man-
 chester,
 And once the sea, that blue end of the
 world,
 That fair scroll-finis of a wicked book,—
 And twice a prison,—back at inter-
 vals,
 Returning to the hills. Hills draw
 like heaven,

And stronger sometimes, holding out
 their hands
 To pull you from the vile flats up to
 them ;
 And though, perhaps, these strollers
 still strolled back,
 As sheep do, simply that they knew
 the way,
 They certainly felt bettered unaware
 Emerging from the social smut of
 towns
 To wipe their feet clean on the moun-
 tain-turf.
 In which long wanderings, Marian
 lived and learned,
 Endured and learned. The people
 on the roads
 Would stop and ask her how her eyes
 outgrew
 Her cheeks, and if she meant to lodge
 the birds
 In all that hair ; and then they lifted
 her
 The miller in his cart, a mile or
 twain,
 The butcher's boy on horseback.
 Often, too,
 The pedlar stopped, and tapped her on
 the head
 With absolute forefinger, brown and
 ringed,
 And asked if peradventure she could
 read !
 And when she answered " Ay," would
 toss her down
 Some stray odd volume from his
 heavy pack,
 A Thomson's " Seasons," mulcted of
 the " Spring,"
 Or half a play of Shakspeare's, torn
 across :
 (She had to guess the bottom of a page
 By just the top sometimes,—as diffi-
 cult,
 As, sitting on the moon, to guess the
 earth !)
 Or else a sheaf of leaves (for that small
 Ruth's
 Small gleanings) torn out from the
 heart of books,
 From Churchyard Elegies and Edens
 Lost,
 From Burns, and Bunyan, Selkirk,
 and Tom Jones.
 'Twas somewhat hard to keep the
 things distinct,

And oft the jangling influence jarred
 the child
 Like looking at a sunset full of grace
 Through a pothouse window while the
 drunken oaths
 Went on behind her ; but she weeded
 out
 Her book-leaves, threw away the
 leaves that hurt
 (First tore them small, that none
 should find a word),
 And made a nosegay of the sweet and
 good
 To fold within her breast, and pore
 upon
 At broken moments of the noontide
 glare,
 When leave was given her to untie her
 cloak
 And rest upon the dusty roadside
 bank
 From the highway's dust. Or oft,
 the journey done,
 Some city friend would lead her by
 the hand
 To hear a lecture at an institute :
 And thus she had grown, this Marian
 Erle of ours,
 To no book-learning,—she was ignor-
 ant
 Of authors,—not in earshot of the
 things
 Out-spoken o'er the heads of common
 men,
 By men who are uncommon,—but
 within
 The cadenced hum of such, and
 capable
 Of catching from the fringes of the
 wind
 Some fragmentary phrases, here and
 there,
 Of that fine music,—which, being
 carried in
 To her soul, had reproduced itself
 afresh
 In finer motions of the lips and lids.

She said, in speaking of it, " If a
 flower
 Were thrown you out of heaven at
 intervals,
 You'd soon attain to a trick of look-
 ing up,—
 And so with her." She counted me
 her years,

<p>Till I felt old ; and then she counted me Her sorrowful pleasures, till I felt ashamed. She told me she was almost glad and calm On such and such a season ; sate and sewed, With no one to break up her crystal thoughts ; While rhymes from lovely poems span around Their ringing circles of ecstatic tune, Beneath the moistened finger of the Hour. Her parents called her a strange, sickly child, Not good for much, and given to sulk and stare, And smile into the hedges and the clouds, And tremble if one shook her from her fit By any blow, or wordeven. Out-door jobs Went ill with her ; and household quiet work, She was not born to. Had they kept the north, They might have had their penny- worth out of her, Like other parents, in the factories (Your children work for you, not you for them, Or else they better had been choked with air The first breath drawn) ; but, in this tramping life, Was nothing to be done with such a child, But tramp and tramp. And yet she knitted hose Not ill, and was not dull at needle- work ; And all the country people gave her pence For darning stockings past their natural age, And patching petticoats from old to new, And other light work done for thrifty wives.</p> <p>One day, said Marian,—the sun shone that day—</p>	<p>Her mother had been badly beat, and felt The bruises sore about her wretched soul (That must have been) : she came in suddenly, And snatching, in a sort of breathless rage, Her daughter's headgear comb, let down the hair Upon her, like a sudden waterfall, And drew her drenched and passive, by the arm, Outside the hut they lived in. When the child Could clear her blinded face from all that stream Of tresses . . . there, a man stood, with beast's eyes, That seemed as they would swallow her alive, Complete in body and spirit, hair and all,— With burning stertorous breath that hurt her cheek, He breathed so near. The mother held her tight, Saying hard between her teeth— “ Why wench, why wench, The squire speaks to you now—the squire's too good ; He means to set you up, and comfort us. Be mannerly at least.” The child turned round, And looked up piteous in the mother's face (Be sure that mother's death-bed will not want Another devil to damn, than such a look) . . . “ Oh, mother ! ” then, with desperate glance to heaven, “ God, free me from my mother,” she shrieked out, “ These mothers are too dreadful.” And, with force As passionate as fear, she tore her hands Like lilies from the rocks, from hers and his, And sprang down, bounded headlong down the steep, Away from both—away, if possible, As far as God,—away ! They yelled at her,</p>
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As famished hounds at a hare. She
 heard them yell,
 She felt her name hiss after her from
 the hills,
 Like shot from guns. On, on. And
 now she had cast
 The voices off with the uplands. On.
 Mad fear
 Was running in her feet and killing
 the ground ;
 The white roads curled as if she burnt
 them up,
 The green fields melted, wayside trees
 fell back
 To make room for her. Then, her
 head grew vexed,
 Trees, fields, turned on her, and ran
 after her ;
 She heard the quick pants of the hills
 behind,
 Their keen air pricked her neck. She
 had lost her feet,
 Could run no more, yet, somehow,
 went as fast,—
 The horizon, red 'twixt steeples in the
 east,
 So sucked her forward, forward, while
 her heart
 Kept swelling, swelling, till it swelled
 so big
 It seemed to fill her body ; then it
 burst,
 And overflowed the world and
 swamped the light,
 " And now I am dead and safe,"
 thought Marian Erle—
 She had dropped, she had fainted.
 As the sense returned,
 The night had passed—not life's
 night. She was 'ware
 Of heavy tumbling motions, creaking
 wheels,
 The driver shouting to the lazy team
 That swung their rankling bells
 against her brain ;
 While, through the waggon's cover-
 ture and chinks,
 The cruel yellow morning pecked at
 her
 Alive or dead, upon the straw inside,—
 At which her soul ached back into
 the dark
 And prayed, " no more of that." A
 waggoner
 Had found her in a ditch beneath the
 moon,
 As white as moonshine, save for the
 oozing blood.
 At first he thought her dead ; but
 when he had wiped
 The mouth and heard it sigh, he
 raised her up,
 And laid her in his waggon in the
 straw,
 And so conveyed her to the distant
 town
 To which his business called himself,
 and left
 That heap of misery at the hospital.
 She stirred ;—the place seemed new
 and strange as death.
 The white strait bed, with others
 strait and white,
 Like graves dug side by side, at meas-
 ured lengths,
 And quiet people walking in and out
 With wonderful low voices and soft
 steps,
 And apparitional equal care for each,
 Astonished her with order, silence,
 law :
 And when a gentle hand held out a
 cup,
 She took it, as you do at Sacrament,
 Half awed, half melted,—not being
 used, indeed,
 To so much love as makes the form of
 love
 And courtesy of manners. Delicate
 drinks
 And rare white bread, to which some
 dying eyes
 Were turned in observation. O my
 God,
 How sick we must be, ere we make
 men just !
 I think it frets the saints in heaven to
 see
 How many desolate creatures on the
 earth
 Have learnt the simple dues of fel-
 lowship
 And social comfort, in a hospital,
 As Marian did. Shelay there, stunned,
 half tranced,
 And wished, at intervals of growing
 sense,
 She might be sicker yet, if sickness
 made
 The world so marvellous kind, the air
 so hushed,

And all her wake-time quiet as a sleep;
 For now she understood (as such things were)
 How sickness ended very oft in heaven,
 Among the unspoken raptures. Yet more sick,
 And surelier happy. Then she dropped her lids,
 And, folding up her hands as flowers at night,
 Would lose no moment of the blessed time.

She lay and seethed in fever many weeks,
 But youth was strong and overcame the test;
 Revolted soul and flesh were reconciled
 And fetched back to the necessary day
 And daylight duties. She could creep about
 The long bare rooms, and stare out drearily
 From any narrow window on the street,
 Till some one, who had nursed her as a friend,
 Said coldly to her, as an enemy,
 "She had leave to go next week, being well enough,"
 While only her heart ached. "Go next week," thought she,
 "Next week! how would it be with her next week,
 Let out into that terrible street alone
 Among the pushing people . . . to go . . . where?"

One day, the last before the dreaded last,
 Among the convalescents, like herself
 Prepared to go next morning, she sate dumb,
 And heard half absently the women talk,
 How one was famished for her baby's cheeks—
 "The little wretch would know her! a year old!
 And lively, like his father!" one was keen
 To get to work, and fill some clamorous mouths;

B.P.

And one was tender for her dear good-man
 Who had missed her sorely,—and one, querulous . . .
 "Would pay those scandalous neighbours who had dared
 To talk about her as already dead,"—
 And one was proud . . . "and if her sweetheart Luke
 Had left her for a ruddier face than hers
 (The gossip would be seen through at a glance),
 Sweet riddance of such sweethearts—let him hang!
 'Twere good to have been as sick for such an end."

And while they talked, and Marian felt the worse
 For having missed the worst of all their wrongs,
 A visitor was ushered through the wards
 And paused among the talkers.
 "When he looked,
 It was as if he spoke, and when he spoke
 He sang perhaps," said Marian;
 "could she tell?"
 She only knew" (so much she had chronicled,
 As seraphs might, the making of the sun)
 "That he who came and spake, was Romney Leigh,
 And then, and there, she saw and heard him first."
 And when it was her turn to have the face
 Upon her,—all those buzzing pallid lips
 Being satisfied with comfort—when he changed
 To Marian, saying "And *you*? you're going, where?"—
 She, moveless as a worm beneath a stone
 Which some one's stumbling foot has spurned aside,
 Withered suddenly, astonished with the light,
 And breaking into sobs cried, "Where I go?
 None asked me till this moment. Can I say

D D

Where I go? when it has not seemed
worth while

To God Himself, Who thinks of every-
one,

To think of me, and fix where I shall
go?"

"So young," he gently asked her,
"you have lost

Your father and your mother?"

"Both," she said,
"Both lost! my father was burnt up
with gin

Or ever I sucked milk, and so is lost.
My mother sold me to a man last
month,

And so my mother's lost, 'tis mani-
fest.

And I, who fled from her for miles
and miles,

As if I had caught sight of the fires of
hell

Through some wild gap (she was my
mother, sir),

It seems I shall be lost too, presently.
And so we end, all three of us."

"Poor child!"
He said,—with such a pity in his voice,
It soothed her more than her own
tears,—"poor child!

'Tis simple that betrayal by mother's
love

Should bring despair of God's too.
Yet be taught;

He's better to us than many mothers
are,

And children cannot wander beyond
reach

Of the sweep of His white raiment.
Touch and hold!

And if you weep still, weep where
John was laid

While Jesus loved him."

"She could say the words,"
She told me, "exactly as he uttered
them

A year back, . . . since, in any
doubt or dark,

They came out like the stars, and
shone on her

With just their comfort. Common
words, perhaps;

The ministers in church might say
the same;

But *he*, he made the church with what
he spoke,—

The difference was the miracle," said
she.

Then catching up her smile to ravish-
ment,

She added quickly, "I repeat his
words,

But not his tones: can anyone repeat
The music of an organ, out of church?

And when he said 'poor child,' I shut
my eyes

To feel how tenderly his voice broke
through,

As the ointment-box broke on the
Holy feet

To let out the rich medicative nard."

She told me how he had raised and
rescued her

With reverent pity, as, in touching
grief,

He touched the wounds of Christ,—
and made her feel

More self-respecting. Hope, he called,
belief

In God,—work, worship . . . there-
fore let us pray!

And thus, to snatch her soul from
atheism,

And keep it stainless from her mother's
face,

He sent her to a famed sempstress-
house

Far off in London, there to work and
hope.

With that, they parted. She kept
sight of Heaven,

But not of Romney. He had good to do
To others: through the days and
through the nights,

She sewed and sewed and sewed.
She brooded sometimes,

And wondered, while, along the
tawny light,

She struck the new thread into her
needle's eye,

How people, without mothers on the
hills,

Could choose the town to live in!—
then she drew

The stitch, and mused how Romney's
face would look,

And if 'twere likely he'd remember
hers,

When they two had their meeting
after death.

FOURTH BOOK

THEY met still sooner. 'Twas a year
 from thence
 That Lucy Gresham, the sick semp-
 stress girl,
 Who sewed by Marian's chair so still
 and quick,
 And leant her head upon the back to
 cough
 More freely when, the mistress turn-
 ing round,
 The others took occasion to laugh
 out,—
 Gave up at last. Among the workers,
 spoke
 A bold girl with black eyebrows and
 red lips,—
 "You know the news? Who's dying,
 do you think?
 Our Lucy Gresham. I expected it
 As little as Nell Hart's wedding.
 Blush not, Nell,
 Thy curls be red enough without thy
 cheeks;
 And, some day, there'll be found a
 man to dote
 On red curls.—Lucy Gresham swooned
 last night,
 Dropped sudden in the street while
 going home;
 And now the baker says, who took her
 up
 And laid her by her grandmother in
 bed,
 He'll give her a week to die in. Pass
 the silk.
 Let's hope he gave her a loaf too,
 within reach,
 For otherwise they'll starve before
 they die,
 That funny pair of bedfellows! Miss
 Bell,
 I'll thank you for the scissors. The
 old crone
 Is paralytic—that's the reason why
 Our Lucy's thread went faster than
 her breath,
 Which went too quick, we all know.
 Marian Erle!
 Why, Marian Erle, you're not the
 fool to cry?
 Your tears spoil Lady Waldemar's
 new dress,
 You piece of pity!"

Marian rose up straight,

And, breaking through the talk and
 through the work,
 Went outward, in the face of their
 surprise,
 To Lucy's home, to nurse her back to
 life
 Or down to death. She knew, by such
 an act,
 All place and grace were forfeit in the
 house,
 Whose mistress would supply the
 missing hand
 With necessary, not inhuman haste,
 And take no blame. But pity, too,
 had dues:
 She could not leave a solitary soul
 To founder in the dark, while she
 sate still
 And lavished stitches on a lady's hem
 As if no other work were paramount.
 "Why, God," thought Marian, "has
 a missing hand
 This moment; Lucy wants a drink,
 perhaps.
 Let others miss me! never miss me,
 God!"

So Marian sate by Lucy's bed, content
 With duty, and was strong, for recom-
 pense,
 To hold the lamp of human love arm-
 high
 To catch the death-strained eyes and
 comfort them,
 Until the angels, on the luminous side
 Of death, had got theirs ready. And
 she said,
 If Lucy thanked her sometimes,
 called her kind,
 It touched her strangely. "Marian
 Erle, called kind!
 What, Marian, beaten and sold, who
 could not die!
 'Tis verily good fortune to be kind.
 Ah, you," she said, "who are born to
 such a grace,
 Be sorry for the unlicensed class, the
 poor,
 Reduced to think the best good for-
 tune means
 That others, simply, should be kind to
 them."

From sleep to sleep while Lucy slid
 away
 So gently, like the light upon a hill,

Of which none names the moment
 that it goes,
 Though all see when 'tis gone,—a
 man came in
 And stood beside the bed. The old
 idiot wretch
 Screamed feebly, like a baby over-
 lain,
 "Sir, sir, you won't mistake me for
 the corpse?
 Don't look at *me*, sir! never bury *me*!
 Although I lie here, I'm alive as you,
 Except my legs and arms,—I eat and
 drink,
 And understand—(that you're the
 gentleman
 Who fits the funerals up, Heaven
 speed you, sir,)
 And certainly I should be livelier still
 If Lucy here . . . sir, Lucy is the
 corpse . . .
 Had worked more properly to buy me
 wine:
 But Lucy, sir, was always slow at
 work,
 I shan't lose much by Lucy. Marian
 Erle,
 Speak up and show the gentleman
 the corpse."
 And then a voice said, "Marian Erle."
 She rose;
 It was the hour for angels—there,
 stood hers!
 She scarcely marvelled to see Rom-
 ney Leigh.
 As light November snows to empty
 nests,
 As grass to graves, as moss to mil-
 dewed stones,
 As July suns to ruins, through the
 rents,
 As ministering spirits to mourners,
 through a loss,
 As Heaven itself to men, through
 pangs of death,
 He came uncalled wherever grief had
 come.
 "And so," said Marian Erle, "we
 met anew."
 And added softly, "so, we shall not
 part."
 He was not angry that she had left
 the house
 Wherein he placed her. Well—she
 had feared it might

Have vexed him. Also, when he
 found her set
 On keeping, though the dead was out
 of sight,
 That half-dead, half-live body left
 behind
 With cankerous heart and flesh,—
 which took your best
 And cursed you for the little good it
 did
 (Could any leave the bedrid wretch
 alone,
 So joyless, she was thankless even to
 God,
 Much less to you?) he did not say
 'twas well,
 Yet Marian thought he did not take it
 ill,
 Since day by day he came, and, every
 day,
 She felt within his utterance and his
 eyes
 A closer, tenderer presence of the
 soul,
 Until at last he said, "We shall not
 part."
 On that same day, was Marian's work
 complete:
 She had smoothed the empty bed,
 and swept the floor
 Of coffin sawdust, set the chairs anew
 The dead had ended gossip in, and
 stood
 In that poor room so cold and orderly,
 The door-key in her hand, prepared
 to go
 As *they* had, howbeit not their way.
 He spoke.
 "Dear Marian, of one clay God made
 us all,
 And though men push and poke and
 paddle in't
 (As children play at fashioning dirt-
 pies)
 And call their fancies by the name of
 facts,
 Assuming difference, lordship, privi-
 lege,
 When all's plain dirt,—they come
 back to it at last;
 The first grave-digger proves it with
 a spade,
 And pats all even. Need we wait for
 this,

You, Marian, and I, Romney ? ”
 She, at that,
 Looked blindly in his face, as when
 one looks

Through driving autumn-rains to
 find the sky.

He went on speaking.

“ Marian, I being born
 What men call noble, and you, issued
 from

The noble people,—though the tyrannous
 sword

Which pierced Christ's heart, has
 cleft the world in twain

'Twixt class and class, opposing rich
 to poor,—

Shall *we* keep parted ? Not so. Let
 us lean

And strain together rather, each to
 each,

Compress the red lips of this gaping
 wound,

As far as two souls can,—ay, lean and
 league,

I, from my superabundance,—from
 your want,

You,—joining in a protest 'gainst the
 wrong

On both sides ! ”—

All the rest, he held her hand
 In speaking, which confused the
 sense of much ;

Her heart, against his words, beat out
 so thick,

They might as well be written on the
 dust

Where some poor bird, escaping from
 hawk's beak,

Has dropped, and beats its shuddering
 wings,—the lines

Are rubbed so,—yet 'twas something
 like to this,

—“ That they two, standing at the
 two extremes

Of social classes, had received one
 seal,

Been dedicate and drawn beyond
 themselves

To mercy and ministration,—he, in-
 deed,

Through what he knew, and she,
 through what she felt,

He, by man's conscience, she, by
 woman's heart,

Relinquishing their several 'vantage
 posts

Of wealthy ease and honourable
 toil,

To work with God at love. And,
 since God willed

That, putting out his hand to touch
 this ark,

He found a woman's hand there, he'd
 accept

The sign too, hold the tender fingers
 fast,

And say, ‘ My fellow-worker, be my
 wife ! ’ ”

She told the tale with simple, rustic
 turns,—

Strong leaps of meaning in her sud-
 den eyes

That took the gaps of any imperfect
 phrase

Of the unschooled speaker : I have
 rather writ

The thing I understood so, than the
 thing

I heard so. And I cannot render
 right

Her quick gesticulation, wild yet soft,
 Self-startled from the habitual mood

she used,

Half sad, half languid,—like dumb
 creatures (now

A rustling bird, and now a wandering
 deer,

Or squirrel against the oak-gloom
 flashing up

His sidelong burnished head, in just
 her way

Of savage spontaneity) that stir
 Abruptly the green silence of the

woods,
 And make it stranger, holier, more
 profound ;

As Nature's general heart confessed
 itself

Of life, and then fell backward on
 repose.

I kissed the lips that ended.—“ So
 indeed

He loves you, Marian ? ”
 “ Loves me ! ” She looked up

With a child's wonder when you ask
 him first

Who made the sun—a puzzled blush,
 that grew,

Then broke off in a rapid radiant
 smile

Of sure solution. "Loves me! he
loves all,—
And me, of course. He had not asked
me else
To work with him for ever, and be his
wife."

Her words reproved me. This per-
haps was love—

To have its hands too full of gifts to
give,

For putting out a hand to take a gift ;

To love so much, the perfect round of
love

Includes, in strict conclusion, the be-
ing loved ;

As Eden-dew went up and fell again,
Enough for watering Eden. Obvi-
ously

She had not thought about his love at
all :

The cataracts of her soul had poured
themselves,

And risen self-crowned in rainbow :
would she ask

Who crowned her ?—it sufficed that
she was crowned.

With women of my class, 'tis other-
wise :

We haggle for the small change of our
gold,

And so much love, accord, for so
much love,

Rialto-prices. Are we therefore
wrong ?

If marriage be a contract, look to it
then,

Contracting parties should be equal,
just ;

But if, a simple fealty on one side,
A mere religion,—right to give, is all,

And certain brides of Europe duly ask
To mount the pile, as Indian widows
do,

The spices of their tender youth
heaped up,

The jewels of their gracious virtues
worn,

More gems, more glory,—to consume
entire

For a living husband ! as the man's
alive,

Not dead,—the woman's duty, by so
much,

Advanced in England, beyond Hin-
dostan.

I sate there, musing, till she touched
my hand

With hers, as softly as a strange white
bird

She feared to startle in touching.
"You are kind.

But are you, peradventure, vexed at
heart

Because your cousin takes me for a
wife ?

I know I am not worthy—nay, in
truth,

I'm glad on't, since, for that, he
chooses me.

He likes the poor things of the world
the best ;

I would not therefore, if I could, be
rich :

It pleases him to stoop for butter-
cups ;

I would not be a rose upon the wall
A queen might stop at, near the
palace-door,

To say to a courtier, 'Pluck that rose
for me,

'It's prettier than the rest.' O
Romney Leigh !

I'd rather far be trodden by his foot,
Than lie in a great queen's bosom."

Out of breath
She paused.

"Sweet Marian, do you disavow
The roses with that face ?"

She dropt her head,
As if the wind had caught that flower
of her,

And bent it in the garden,—then
looked up

With grave assurance. "Well, you
think me bold !

But so we all are, when we're praying
God.

And if I'm bold—yet, lady, credit me,
That, since I know myself for what I
am,

Much fitter for his handmaid than
his wife,

I'll prove the handmaid and the wife
at once,

Serve tenderly, and love obediently,
And be a worthier mate, perhaps,
than some

Who are wooed in silk among their
learned books ;

While I shall set myself to read his
eyes,

Till such grow plainer to me than the French
 To wisest ladies. Do you think I'll miss
 A letter, in the spelling of his mind ?
 No more than they do, when they sit and write
 Their flying words with flickering wildfowl tails,
 Nor ever pause to ask how many *i*'s,
 Should that be *y* or *z*—they know't so well :
 I've seen them writing, when I brought a dress
 And waited,—floating out their soft white hands
 On shining paper. But they're hard sometimes,
 For all those hands !—we've used out many nights,
 And worn the yellow daylight into shreds
 Which flapped and shivered down our aching eyes
 Till night appeared more tolerable, just
 That pretty ladies might look beautiful,
 Who said at last . . . ' You're lazy in that house !
 ' You're slow in sending home the work,—I count
 ' I've waited near an hour for't.' Pardon me,—
 I do not blame them, madam, nor misprize ;
 They are fair and gracious ; ay, but not like you,
 Since none but you has Mister Leigh's own blood
 Both noble and gentle,—and, without it . . . well,
 They are fair, I said ; so fair, it scarce seems strange
 That, flashing out in any looking-glass
 The wonder of their glorious brows and breasts,
 They are charmed so, they forget to look behind
 And mark how pale we've grown, we pitiful
 Reminders of the world. And so, perhaps,
 If Mister Leigh had chosen a wife from these,

She might . . . although he's better than her best,
 And dearly she would know it . . . steal a thought
 Which should be all his, an eye-glance from his face,
 To plunge into the mirror opposite, In search of her own beauty's pearl : while I . . .
 Ah, dearest lady, serge will outweigh silk
 For winter-wear, when bodies feel a-cold,
 And I'll be a true wife to your cousin Leigh."

Before I answered, he was there himself.
 I think he had been standing in the room,
 And listened probably to half her talk,
 Arrested, turned to stone,—as white as stone.
 Will tender sayings make men look so white ?
 He loves her then profoundly.
 " You are here,
 Aurora ? Here I meet you !"—We clasped hands.

" Even so, dear Romney. Lady Waldemar
 Has sent me in haste to find a cousin of mine
 Who shall be."

" Lady Waldemar is good."

" Here's one, at least, who is good,"
 I sighed, and touched
 Poor Marian's happy head, as, dog-like, she
 Most passionately patient, waited on,
 A-tremble for her turn of greeting words ;
 " I've sate a full hour with your Marian Erle,
 And learnt the thing by heart,—and, from my heart,
 Am therefore competent to give you thanks
 For such a cousin."

" You accept at last
 A gift from me, Aurora, without scorn ?

At last I please you? "—How his voice was changed!

"You cannot please a woman against her will,

And once you vexed me. Shall we speak of that?

We'll say, then, you were noble in it all,

And I not ignorant—let it pass. And now,

You please me, Romney, when you please yourself;

So, please you, be fanatical in love, And I'm well pleased. Ah, cousin!

at the old hall, Among the gallery portraits of our Leighs,

We shall not find a sweeter signory Than this pure forehead's."

Not a word he said. How arrogant men are!—Even phil-

anthropists, Who try to take a wife up in the way

They put down a subscription- cheque,—if once

She turns and says, "I will not tax you so,

Most charitable sir,"—feel ill at ease, As though she had wronged them

somehow. I suppose We women should remember what

we are, And not throw back an obolus in-

scribed With Cæsar's image, lightly. I re-

sumed.

"It strikes me, some of those sub-

lime Vandykes Were not too proud, to make good

saints in heaven; And, if so, then they're not too proud

to-day To bow down (now the ruffs are off

their necks) And own this good, true, noble

Marian, . . . yours, And mine, I'll say!—For poets (bear

the word) Half-poets even, are still whole

democrats,— Oh, not that we're disloyal to the high,

But loyal to the low, and cognisant Of the less scrutable majesties. For

me, I comprehend your choice—I justify

Your right in choosing."

"No, no, no," he sighed, With a sort of melancholy im-

patient scorn, As some grown man, who never had

a child, Puts by some child who plays at be-

ing a man; —"You did not, do not, cannot

comprehend My choice, my ends, my motives,

nor myself: No matter now—we'll let it pass,

you say. I thank you for your generous cou-

sins-hip Which helps this present; I accept

for her Your favourable thoughts. We're

fallen on days, We two, who are not poets, when to

wed Requires less mutual love than com-

mon love, For two together to bear out at once

Upon the loveless many. Work in pairs,

In galley-couplings or in marriage-

rings, The difference lies in the honour, not

the work,— And such we're bound to, I and she.

But love, (You poets are benighted in this age:

The hour's too late for catching even

moths, You've gnats instead,) love!—

love's fool-paradise Is out of date, like Adam's. Set a

swan To swim the Trenton, rather than

true love To float its fabulous plumage safely

down The cataracts of this loud transition-

time,— Whose roar, for ever, henceforth, in

my ears, Must keep me deaf to music."

There, I turned And kissed poor Marian, out of dis-

content. The man had baffled, chafed me, till

I flung For refuge to the woman,—as, some

times,

Impatient of some crowded room's
close smell,
You throw a window open, and lean
out
To breathe a long breath in the dewy
night,
And cool your angry forehead. She,
at least,
Was not built up, as walls are, brick
by brick ;
Each fancy squared, each feeling
ranged by line,
The very heat, of burning youth
applied
To indurate forms and systems !
excellent bricks,
A well-built wall,—which stops you
on the road,
And, into which, you cannot see an
inch
Although you beat your head against
it—pshaw !

" Adieu," I said, " for this time,
cousins both ;
And, cousin Romney, pardon me the
word,
Be happy!—oh, in some esoteric sense
Of course !—I mean no harm in
wishing well.
Adieu, my Marian :—may she come
to me.
Dear Romney, and be married from
my house ?
It is not part of your philosophy
To keep your bird upon the black-
thorn ? "

" Ay,"

He answered, " but it is :—I take
my wife
Directly from the people,—and she
comes,
As Austria's daughter to imperial
France,
Betwixt her eagles, blinking not her
race,
From Margaret's Court at garret-
height, to meet
And wed me at St. James's, nor put
off
Her gown of serge for that. The
things we do,
We do : we'll wear no mask, as if we
blushed."
" Dear Romney, you're the poet," I
replied,—

But felt my smile too mournful for
my word,
And turned and went. Ay, masks,
I thought,—beware
Of tragic masks, we tie before the
glass,
Uplifted on the cothurn half a yard
Above the natural stature ! we would
play
Heroic parts to ourselves,—and end,
perhaps,
As impotently as Athenian wives
Who shrieked in fits at the
Eumenides.

His foot pursued me down the stair.
" At least,
You'll suffer me to walk with you be-
yond
These hideous streets, these graves,
where men alive,
Packed close with earthworms, burr
unconsciously
About the plague that slew them ;
let me go.

The very women pelt their souls in
mud
At any woman who walks here
alone.
How came you here alone ?—you
are ignorant."

We had a strange and melancholy
walk :
The night came drizzling downward
in dark rain ;
And, as we walked, the colour of the
time,

The act, the presence, my hand
upon his arm,
His voice in my ear, and mine to my
own sense,
Appeared unnatural. We talked
modern books,
And daily papers ; Spanish Marriage-
schemes,
And English climate—was't so cold
last year ?
And will the wind change by to-
morrow morn ?
Can Guizot stand ? is London full ?
is trade
Competitive ? has Dickens turned
his hinge
A-pinch upon the fingers of the
great ?
And are potatoes to grow mythical

Like moly ? will the apple die out too ?

Which way is the wind to-night ? south-east ? due east ?

We talked on fast, while every common word

Seemed tangled with the thunder at one end,

And ready to pull down upon our heads

A terror out of sight. And yet to pause

Were surelier mortal: we tore greedily up

All silence, all the innocent breathing-points,

As if, like pale conspirators in haste, We tore up papers where our signatures

Imperilled us to an ugly shame or death.

I cannot tell you why it was. 'Tis plain

We had not loved nor hated: wherefore dread

To spill gunpowder on ground safe from fire ?

Perhaps we had lived too closely, to diverge

So absolutely: leave two clocks, they say,

Wound up to different hours, upon one shelf,

And slowly, through the interior wheels of each,

The blind mechanic motion sets itself

A-throb, to feel out for the mutual time.

It was not so with us, indeed. While he

Struck midnight, I kept striking six at dawn,

While he marked judgment, I, redemption-day;

And such exception to a general law, Imperious upon inert matter even,

Might make us, each to either, insecure,

A beckoning mystery, or a troubling fear.

I mind me, when we parted at the door,

How strange his good-night sounded, —like good-night

Beside a deathbed, where the morrow's sun

Is sure to come too late for more good-days:—

And all that night I thought . . . " Good-night," said he.

And so, a month passed. Let me set it down

At once,—I have been wrong, I have been wrong.

We are wrong always, when we think too much

Of what we think or are; albeit our thoughts

Be verily bitter as self-sacrifice, We're no less selfish. If we sleep on rocks

Or roses, sleeping past the hour of noon

We're lazy. This I write against myself.

I had done a duty in the visit paid To Marian, and was ready otherwise

To give the witness of my presence and name

Whenever she should marry.—Which, I thought,

Sufficed. I even had cast into the scale

An overweight of justice toward the match;

The Lady Waldemar had missed her tool,

Had broken it in the lock as being too straight

For a crooked purpose, while poor Marian Erle

Missed nothing in my accents or my acts:

I had not been ungenerous on the whole,

Nor yet untender; so, enough. I felt

Tired, overworked: this marriage somewhat jarred;

Or, if it did not, all the bridal noise . . .

The pricking of the map of life with pins,

In schemes of . . . " Here we'll go," and " There we'll stay,"

And " Everywhere we'll prosper in our love,"

Was scarce my business. Let them order it;

Who else should care? I threw
myself aside,
As one who had done her work and
shuts her eyes
To rest the better.

I, who should have known,
Forereckoned mischief! Where we
disavow
Being keeper to our brother, we're
his Cain.

I might have held that poor child to
my heart

A little longer! 'twould have hurt
me much

To have hastened by its beats the
marriage-day,

And kept her safe meantime from
tampering hands,

Or, peradventure, traps? What
drew me back

From telling Romney plainly, the
designs

Of Lady Waldemar, as spoken out
To me . . . me? had I any right,

ay, right,
With womanly compassion and re-
serve

To break the fall of woman's impu-
dence?—

To stand by calmly, knowing what I
knew,

And hear him call her *good*?

Distrust that word,
“There is none good save God,”

said Jesus Christ.

If He once, in the first creation-
week,

Called creatures good,—for ever,
afterward,

The Devil only has done it, and his
heirs,

The knaves who win so, and the
fools who lose;

The word's grown dangerous. In
the middle age,

I think they called malignant fays
and imps

Good people. A good neighbour,
even in this,

Is fatal sometimes, cuts your morn-
ing up

To mince-meat of the very smallest
talk.

Then helps to sugar her bohea at
night

With your reputation. I have
known good wives,

As chaste, or nearly so, as Poti-
phar's;

And good, good mothers, who would
use a child

To better an intrigue; good friends,
beside,

(Very good) who hung succinctly
round your neck

And sucked your breath, as cats are
fabled to do

By sleeping infants. And we all
have known

Good critics, who have stamped out
poet's hopes;

Good statesmen, who pulled ruin on
the state;

Good patriots, who, for a theory,
risked a cause;

Good kings, who disembowelled for a
tax;

Good Popes, who brought all good to
jeopardy;

Good Christians, who sate still in
easy-chairs,

And damned the general world for
standing up.—

Now, may the good God pardon all
good men!

How bitterly I speak,—how certainly
The innocent white milk in us is
turned,

By much persistent shining of the
sun!—

Shake up the sweetest in us long
enough

With men, it drops to foolish curd,
too sour

To feed the most untender of Christ's
lambs.

I should have thought . . . a
woman of the world

Like her I'm meaning,—centre to
herself,

Who has wheeled on her own pivot
half a life

In isolated self-love and self-will,
As a windmill seen at distance radi-
ating

Its delicate white vans against the
sky,

So soft and soundless, simply beau-
tiful.—

Seen nearer . . . what a roar and
 tear it makes,
 How it grinds and bruises ! . . . if
 she loves at last,
 Her love's a re-adjustment of self-
 love,
 No more ; a need felt of another's
 use

To her one advantage,—as the mill
 wants grain,
 The fire wants fuel, the very wolf
 wants prey ;
 And none of these is more unscrupu-
 lous
 Than such a charming woman when
 she loves.

She'll not be thwarted by an ob-
 stacle

So trifling as . . . her soul is . . .
 much less yours !—

Is God a consideration ?—she loves
you,

Not God ; she will not flinch for
 Him indeed :

She did not for the Marchioness of
 Perth,

When wanting tickets for the birth-
 night-ball.

She loves you, sir, with passion, to
 lunacy ;

She loves you like her diamonds . . .
 almost.

Well,

A month passed so, and then the
 notice came ;

On such a day the marriage at the
 church.

I was not backward.

Half Saint Giles in frieze
 Was bidden to meet Saint James in
 cloth of gold,

And, after contract at the altar,
 pass

To eat a marriage-feast on Hamp-
 stead Heath.

Of course the people came in uncom-
 pelled,

Lame, blind, and worse—sick, sor-
 rowful, and worse,

The humours of the peccant social
 wound

All pressed out, poured out upon
 Pimlico,

Exasperating the unaccustomed air
 With hideous interfusion : you'd
 suppose

A finished generation, dead of plague,
 Swept outward from their graves
 into the sun,

The moil of death upon them. What
 a sight !

A holiday of miserable men
 Is sadder than a burial-day of kings.

They clogged the streets, they oozed
 into the church

In a dark slowstream, like blood. To
 see that sight,

The noble ladies stood up in their
 pews,

Some pale for fear, a few as red for
 hate,

Some simply curious, some just insol-
 ent,

And some in wondering scorn,—
 "What next ? what next ?"

These crushed their delicate rose-
 lips from the smile

That misbecame them in a holy
 place,

With brodered hems of perfumed
 handkerchiefs ;

Those passed the salts with confi-
 dence of eyes

And simultaneous shiver of *moiré*
 silk ;

While all the aisles, alive and black
 with heads,

Crawled slowly toward the altar
 from the street,

As bruised snakes crawl and hiss out
 of a hole

With shuddering involutions, sway-
 ing slow

From right to left, and then from
 left to right,

In pants and pauses. What an ugly
 crest

Of faces, rose upon you everywhere,
 From that crammed mass ! you did
 not usually

See faces like them in the open day :
 They hide in cellars, not to make you
 mad

As Romney Leigh is.—Faces !—O
 my God,

We call those, faces ? men's and
 women's . . . ay,

And children's ;—babies, hanging
 like a rag

Forgotten on their mother's neck,—
 poor mouths,

Wiped clean of mother's milk by
mother's blow,

Before they are taught her cursing.
Faces! . . . phew,

We'll call them vices festering to
despairs,

Or sorrows petrifying to vices: not
A finger-touch of God left whole on
them;

All ruined, lost—the countenance
worn out

As the garments, the will dissolute as
the acts,

The passions loose and dragging in
the dirt

To trip the foot up at the first free
step!—

Those, faces! 'twas as if you had
stirred up hell

To heave its lowest dreg-fiends upper-
most

In fiery swirls of slime,—such
strangled fronts,

Such obdurate jaws were thrown up
constantly,

To twit you with your race, corrupt
your blood,

And grind to devilish colours all your
dreams

Henceforth . . . though, haply, you
should drop asleep

By clink of silver waters, in a muse
On Raffael's mild "Madonna of the
Bird."

I've waked and slept through many
nights and days

Since then,—but still that day will
catch my breath

Like a nightmare. There are fatal
days, indeed,

In which the fibrous years have taken
root

So deeply, that they quiver to their
tops

Whene'er you stir the dust of such a
day.

My cousin met me with his eyes and
hand,

And then, with just a word, . . . that
"Marian Erle

Was coming with her bridesmaids
presently,"

Made haste to place me by the altar-
stair,

Where he and other noble gentlemen
And high-born ladies, waited for the
bride.

We waited. It was early: there was
time

For greeting, and the morning's com-
pliment;

And gradually a ripple of women's
talk

Arose and fell, and tossed about a
spray

Of English s's, soft as a silent hush,
And, notwithstanding, quite as

audible
As louder phrases thrown out by the
men.

—"Yes, really, if we've need to wait
in church,

We've need to talk there."—"She?
'Tis Lady Ayr,

In blue—not purple! that's the
dowager."

—"She looks as young."—"She
flirts as young, you mean!

Why if you had seen her upon Thurs-
day night,

You'd call Miss Norris modest."—
"You again!

I waltzed with you three hours back.
Up at six,

Up still at ten: scarce time to change
one's shoes.

I feel as white and sulky as a ghost,
So pray don't speak to me, Lord

Belcher."—"No,
I'll look at you instead, and it's

enough
While you have that face." "In
church, my lord! fie, fie!"

—"Adair, you stayed for the Divi-
sion?"—"Lost

By one." "The devil it is! I'm sorry
for't.

And if I had not promised Mistress
Grove" . . .

—"You might have kept your word
to Liverpool."

"Constituents must remember, after
all,

We're mortal."—"We remind them
of it."—"Hark,

The bride comes! Here she comes,
in a stream of milk!"

—"There? Dear, you are asleep
still; don't you know

The five Miss Granvilles? always dressed in white
 To show they're ready to be married."
 —"Lower!
 The aunt is at your elbow."—"Lady Maud,
 Did Lady Waldemar tell you she had seen
 This girl of Leigh's?"—"No,—wait!
 'twas Mrs. Brookes,
 Who told me Lady Waldemar told her—
 No, 'twasn't Mrs. Brookes."—"She's pretty?"—"Who?
 Mrs. Brookes? Lady Waldemar?"—"How hot!
 Pray is't the law to-day we're not to breathe?
 You're treading on my shawl—I thank you, sir."
 —"They say the bride's a mere child, who can't read,
 But knows the things she shouldn't, with wide-awake
 Great eyes. I'd go through fire to look at her."
 —"You do, I think."—"And Lady Waldemar
 (You see her; sitting close to Romney Leigh;
 How beautiful she looks, a little flushed!)
 Has taken up the girl, and organised
 Leigh's folly. Should I have come here, you suppose,
 Except she'd asked me?"—"She'd have served him more
 By marrying him herself."
 "Ah—there she comes,
 The bride, at last!"
 "Indeed, no. Past eleven.
 She puts off her patched petticoat to-day
 And puts on Mayfair manners, so begins
 By setting us to wait."—"Yes, yes, this Leigh
 Was always odd; it's in the blood, I think;
 His father's uncle's cousin's second son
 Was, was . . . you understand me—and for him,
 He's stark!—has turned quite lunatic upon

This modern question of the poor—the poor:
 An excellent subject when you're moderate;
 You've seen Prince Albert's model lodging-house?
 Does honour to his Royal Highness. Good!
 But would he stop his carriage in Cheapside
 To shake a common fellow by the fist
 Whose name was . . . Shakspeare?
 no. We draw a line,
 And if we stand not by our order, we
 In England, we fall headlong. Here's a sight,—
 A hideous sight, a most indecent sight!
 My wife would come, sir, or I had kept her back.
 By heaven, sir, when poor Damiens' trunk and limbs
 Were torn by horses, women of the Court
 Stood by and stared, exactly as to-day
 On this dismembering of society,
 With pretty troubled faces."
 "Now, at last.
 She comes now."
 "Where? who sees? you push me, sir,
 Beyond the point of what is mannerly.
 You're standing, madam, on my second founce—
 I do beseech you."
 "No—it's not the bride.
 Half-past eleven. How late. The bridegroom, mark,
 Gets anxious and goes out.
 "And as I said . . .
 These Leighs! our best blood running in the rut!
 It's something awful. We had pardoned him
 A simple misalliance, got up aside
 For a pair of sky-blue eyes; our House of Lords
 Has winked at such things, and we've all been young.
 But here's an inter-marriage reasoned out,
 A contract (carried boldly to the light,
 To challenge observation, pioneer
 Good acts by a great example) 'twixt the extremes

Of martyrised society,—on the left,
The well-born,—on the right, the
merest mob,
To treat as equals !—'tis anarchical !
It means more than it says—'tis
damnable !

Why, sir, we can't have even our
coffee good,
Unless we strain it."

"Here, Miss Leigh !"

"Lord Howe,
You're Romney's friend. What's all
this waiting for ?"

"I cannot tell. The bride has lost
her head

(And way, perhaps !) to prove her
sympathy

With the bridegroom."

"What,—you also, disapprove !"

"Oh, *I* approve of nothing in the
world,"

He answered, "not of you, still less
of me,

Nor even of Romney—though he's
worth us both.

We're all gone wrong. The tune in
us is lost:

And whistling in back alleys to the
moon,

Will never catch it."

Let me draw Lord Howe ;
A born aristocrat, bred Radical,
And educated Socialist, who still
Goes floating, on traditions of his
kind,

Across the theoretic flood from
France,—

Though, like a drenched Noah on a
rotten deck,

Scarce safer for his place there. He,
at least,

Will never land on Ararat, he knows,
To recommence the world on the old
plan :

Indeed, he thinks, said world had
better end ;

He sympathises rather with the fish
Outside, than with the drowned
paired beasts within

Who cannot couple again or multiply :
And that's the sort of Noah he is,
Lord Howe.

He never could be anything complete,

Except a loyal, upright gentleman,
A liberal landlord, graceful diner-out,
And entertainer more than hospitable,
Whom authors dine with and forget
the port.

Whatever he believes, and it is much,
But no-wise certain . . . now here and
now there . . .

He still has sympathies beyond his
creed,

Diverting him from action. In the
House,

No party counts upon him, and all
praise,

All like his books too (he has written
books)

Which, good to lie beside a bishop's
chair,

So oft outreach themselves with jets
of fire

At which the foremost of the progres-
sists

May warm audacious hands in passing
by.

—Of stature over-tall, lounging for
ease ;

Light hair, that seems to carry a wind
in it,

And eyes that, when they look on you,
will lean

Their whole weight half in indolence,
and half

In wishing you unmitigated good,
Until you know not if to flinch from
him

Or thank him.—'Tis Lord Howe.

"We're all gone wrong,"

Said he, "and Romney, that dear
friend of ours,

Is no-wise right. There's one true
thing on earth ;

That's love ! He takes it up, and
dresses it,

And acts a play with it, as Hamlet did,
To show what cruel uncles we have
been,

And how we should be uneasy in our
minds,

While he, Prince Hamlet, weds a
pretty maid

(Who keeps us too long waiting, we'll
confess)

By symbol, to instruct us formally
To fill the ditches up 'twixt class and
class,

And live together in phalansteries.

What then ?—he's mad, our Hamlet !
clap his play,
And bind him."

" Ah, Lord Howe, this spectacle
Pulls stronger at us than the Dane's.
See there !

The crammed aisles heave and strain
and steam with life—

Dear Heaven, what life ! "

" Why, yes,—a poet sees ;
Which makes him different from a
common man.

I, too, see somewhat, though I cannot
sing ;

I should have been a poet, only that
My mother took fright at the ugly
world,

And bore me tongue-tied. If you'll
grant me now

That Romney gives us a fine actor-
piece

To make us merry on his marriage-
morn,

The fable's worse than Hamlet's, I'll
concede.

The terrible people, old and poor and
blind,

Their eyes eat out with plague and
poverty

From seeing beautiful and cheerful
sights,

We'll liken to a brutalised King Lear,
Led out,—by no means to clear scores
with wrongs—

His wrongs are so far back . . . he
has forgot ;

All's past like youth ; but just to wit-
ness here

A simple contract,—he, upon his
side,

And Regan with her sister Goneril
And all the dappled courtiers and
court-fools,

On their side. Not that any of these
would say

They're sorry, neither. What is done,
is done,

And violence is now turned privilege,
As cream turns cheese, if buried long
enough.

What could such lovely ladies have to
do

With the old man there, in those ill-
odorous rags,

Except to keep the wind-side of him ?

Lear

Is flat and quiet, as a decent grave ;
He does not curse his daughters in the
least.

Be these his daughters ? Lear is
thinking of

His porridge chiefly . . . is it getting
cold

At Hampstead ? will the ale be served
in pots ?

Poor Lear, poor daughters ! Bravo,
Romney's play ! "

A murmur and a movement drew
around ;

A naked whisper touched us. Some-
thing wrong !

What's wrong ? The black crowd, as
an over-strained

Cord, quivered in vibrations, and I
saw . . .

Was that *his* face I saw ? . . . his . . .
Romney Leigh's . . .

Which tossed a sudden horror like a
sponge

Into all eyes,—while himself stood
white upon

The topmost altar-stair, and tried to
speak,

And failed, and lifted higher above his
head

A letter . . . as a man who drowns
and gasps.

" My brothers, bear with me ! I am
very weak.

I meant but only good. Perhaps I
meant

Too proudly,—and God snatched the
circumstance

And changed it therefore. There's
no marriage—none.

She leaves me,—she departs,—she
disappears,—

I lose her. Yet I never forced her 'Ay,'
To have her 'No' so cast into my
teeth,

In manner of an accusation, thus.
My friends, you are all dismissed. Go,
eat and drink

According to the programme,—and,
farewell ! "

He ended. There was silence in the
church ;

We heard a baby sucking in its sleep
At the farthest end of the aisle. Then
spoke a man,

"Now, look to it, coves, that all the
 beef and drink
 Be not filched from us like the other
 fun;
 For beer's spilt easier than a woman
 is!
 This gentry is not honest with the
 poor;
 They bring us up, to trick us."—"Go
 it, Jim,"
 A woman screamed back,—“I'm a
 tender soul;
 I never banged a child at two years
 old
 And drew blood from him, but I
 sobbed for it
 Next moment,—and I've had a
 plague of seven.
 I'm tender; I've no stomach even for
 beef,
 Until I know about the girl that's
 lost,
 That's killed, mayhap. I did mis-
 doubt, at first,
 The fine lord meant no good by her,
 or us.
 He, maybe, got the upper hand of her
 By holding up a wedding-ring, and
 then . . .
 A choking finger on her throat, last
 night,
 And just a clever tale to keep us still,
 As she is, poor lost innocent. 'Dis-
 appear!'
 Who ever disappears except a ghost?
 And who believes a story of a ghost?
 I ask you,—would a girl go off, instead
 Of staying to be married? a fine tale!
 A wicked man, I say, a wicked man!
 For my part I would rather starve on
 gin
 Than make my dinner on his beef and
 beer.”—
 At which a cry rose up—"We'll have
 our rights.
 We'll have the girl, the girl! Your
 ladies there
 Are married safely and smoothly
 every day,
 And *she* shall not drop through into a
 trap
 Because she's poor and of the people:
 shame!
 We'll have no tricks played off by
 gentlefolks;
 We'll see her righted."

B.P.

Through the rage and roar
 I heard the broken words which Rom-
 ney flung
 Among the turbulent masses, from
 the ground
 He held still, with his masterful pale
 face—
 As huntsmen throw the ration to the
 pack,
 Who, falling on it headlong, dog on
 dog
 In heaps of fury, rend it, swallow it
 up
 With yelling hound-jaws,—his indig-
 nant words,
 His piteous words, his most pathetic
 words,
 Whereof I caught the meaning here
 and there
 By his gesture . . . torn in morsels,
 yelled across,
 And so devoured. From end to end,
 the church
 Rocked round us like the sea in storm,
 and then
 Broke up like the earth in earthquake.
 Men cried out
 "Police!"—and women stood and
 shrieked for God,
 Or dropt and swooned; or, like a herd
 of deer
 (For whom the black woods suddenly
 grow alive,
 Unleashing their wild shadows down
 the wind
 To hunt the creatures into corners,
 back
 And forward), madly fled, or blindly
 fell,
 Trod screeching underneath the feet
 of those
 Who fled and screeched.
 The last sight left to me
 Was Romney's terrible calm face
 above
 The tumult!—the last sound was
 "Pull him down!
 Strike—kill him!" Stretching my
 unreasoning arms,
 As men in dreams, who vainly inter-
 pose
 'Twixt gods and their undoing, with a
 cry
 I struggled to precipitate myself
 Head-foremost to the rescue of my
 soul

E E

In that white face, . . . till some one
caught me back,
And so the world went out,—I felt no
more.

What followed, was told after by
Lord Howe,

Who bore me senseless from the
strangling crowd

In church and street, and then re-
turned alone

To see the tumult quelled. The men
of law

Had fallen as thunder on a roaring
fire,

And made all silent,—while the
people's smoke

Passed eddying slowly from the
emptied aisles.

Here's Marian's letter, which a ragged
child

Brought running, just as Romney at
the porch

Looked out expectant of the bride.
He sent

The letter to me by his friend Lord
Howe

Some two hours after, folded in a
sheet

On which his well-known hand had
left a word.

Here's Marian's letter.

"Noble friend, dear saint,
Be patient with me. Never think me
vile,

Who might to-morrow morning be
your wife

But that I loved you more than such
a name.

Farewell, my Romney. Let me
write it once,—

My Romney.

" 'Tis so pretty a coupled word,
I have no heart to pluck it with a blot.
We say 'my God' sometimes, upon
our knees,

Who is not therefore vexed : so bear
with it . . .

And me. I know I'm foolish, weak,
and vain ;

Yet most of all I'm angry with myself
For losing your last footstep on the
stair,

That last time of your coming,—
yesterday !

The very first time I lost step of yours

(Its sweetness comes the next to what
you speak),

But yesterday sobs took me by the
throat,

And cut me off from music.

"Mister Leigh,
You'll set me down as wrong in many
things.

You've praised me, sir, for truth,—
and now you'll learn

I had not courage to be rightly true.
I once began to tell you how she came,
The woman . . . and you stared upon
the floor

In one of your fixed thoughts . . .
which put me out

For that day. After, someone spoke
of me,

So wisely, and of you, so tenderly,
Persuading me to silence for your
sake . . .

Well, well ! it seems this moment I was
wrong

In keeping back from telling you the
truth :

There might be truth betwixt us two,
at least,

If nothing else. And yet 'twas dan-
gerous.

Suppose a real angel came from
heaven

To live with men and women ! he'd go
mad,

If no considerate hand should tie a
blind

Across his piercing eyes. 'Tis thus
with you :

You see us too much in your heavenly
light ;

I always thought so, angel,—and
indeed

There's danger that you beat yourself
to death

Against the edges of this alien world,
In some divine and fluttering pity.

"Yes,
It would be dreadful for a friend of
yours,

To see all England thrust you out of
doors

And mock you from the windows.
You might say,

Or think (that's worse), 'There's
some one in the house

I miss and love still.' Dreadful !
"Very kind,

I pray you mark, was Lady Walde-
mar.

She came to see me nine times, rather
ten—

So beautiful, she hurts me like the day
Let suddenly on sick eyes.

“Most kind of all,
Your cousin!—ah, most like you!
Ere you came

She kissed me mouth to mouth: I felt
her soul

Dip through her serious lips in holy
fire.

God help me, but it made me arrogant;
I almost told her that you would not
lose

By taking me to wife: though, ever
since,

I’ve pondered much a certain thing
she asked . . .

‘He loves you, Marian?’ . . . in a
sort of mild

Derisive sadness . . . as a mother
asks

Her babe, ‘You’ll touch that star,
you think?’

“Farewell!
I know I never touched it.

“This is worst:
Babes grow, and lose the hope of
things above;

A silver threepence sets them leaping
high—

But no more stars! mark that.

“I’ve writ all night,
And told you nothing. God, if I could
die,

And let this letter break off innocent
Just here! But no—for your sake . . .

“Here’s the last,
I never could be happy as your wife,
I never could be harmless as your
friend,

I never will look more into your face,
Till God says, ‘Look!’ I charge you,
seek me not,

Nor vex yourself with lamentable
thoughts

That peradventure I have come to
grief;

Be sure I’m well, I’m merry, I’m at
ease,

But such a long way, long way, long
way off,

I think you’ll find me sooner in my
grave,

And that’s my choice, observe. For
what remains,

An over-generous friend will care for
me,

And keep me happy . . . happier . . .
“There’s a blot!

This ink runs thick . . . we light girls
lightly weep . . .

And keep me happier . . . was the
thing to say, . . .

Than as your wife I could be!—O, my
star,

My saint, my soul! for surely you’re
my soul,

Through whom God touched me! I
am not so lost

I cannot thank you for the good you
did,

The tears you stopped, which fell
down bitterly,

Like these—the times you made me
weep for joy

At hoping I should learn to write your
notes

And save the tiring of your eyes, at
night;

And most for that sweet thrice you
kissed my lips

Saying ‘Dear Marian.’

“‘Twould be hard to read,
This letter, for a reader half as learn’d,

But you’ll be sure to master it, in
spite

Of ups and downs. My hand shakes,
I am blind,

I’m poor at writing, at the best,—and
yet

I tried to make my g’s the way you
showed.

Farewell—Christ love you.—Say
‘poor Marian’ now.”

Poor Marian!—wanton Marian!—
was it so,

Or so? For days, her touching, foolish
lines

We mused on with conjectural fantasy,
As if some riddle of a summer-cloud

On which one tries unlike similitudes
Of now a spotted Hydra-skin cast

off,

And now a screen of carven ivory
That shuts the heavens’ conventual

secrets up

From mortals over-bold. We sought
the sense;

She loved him so perhaps (such words
 mean love,)

That, worked on by some shrewd per-
 fidious tongue

(And then I thought of Lady Walde-
 mar),

She left him, not to hurt him ; or per-
 haps

She loved one in her class, or did not
 love,

But mused upon her wild bad tramp-
 ing life,

Until the free blood fluttered at her
 heart,

And black bread eaten by the road-
 side hedge

Seemed sweeter than being put to
 Romney's school

Of philanthropical self-sacrifice,
 Irrevocably.—Girls are girls, beside,
 Thought I, and like a wedding by one
 rule.

You seldom catch these birds, except
 with chaff :

They feel it almost an immoral thing
 To go out and be married in broad
 day,

Unless some winning special flattery
 should

Excuse them to themselves for't, . . .
 "No one parts

Her hair with such a silver line as you,
 One moonbeam from the forehead to
 the crown ! "

Or else . . . " You bite your lip in such
 a way,

It spoils me for the smiling of the
 rest "—

And so on. Then a worthiess gaud or
 two,

To keep for love,—a ribbon for the
 neck,

Or some glass pin,—they have their
 weight with girls.

And Romney sought her many days
 and weeks :

He sifted all the refuse of the town,
 Explored the trains, inquired among
 the ships,

And felt the country through from
 end to end :

No Marian !—Though I hinted what
 I knew,—

A friend of his had reasons of her
 own

For throwing back the match—he
 would not hear :

The lady had been ailing ever since,
 The shock had harmed her. Some-
 thing in his tone

Repressed me ; something in me
 shamed my doubt

To a sigh, repressed too. He went on
 to say

That, putting questions where his
 Marian lodged,

He found she had received for visitors,
 Besides himself and Lady Waldemar

And, that once, 'me—a dubious
 woman dressed

Beyond us both. The rings upon her
 hands

Had dazed the children when she
 threw them pence ;

" She wore her bonnet as the queen
 might hers,

To show the crown," they said,— " a
 scarlet crown

Of roses that had never been in bud."

When Romney told me that,—for
 now and then

He came to tell me how the search
 advanced,

His voice dropped : I bent forward
 for the rest :

The woman had been with her, it
 appeared,

At first from week to week, then day
 by day,

And last, 'twas sure . . .

I looked upon the ground
 To escape the anguish of his eyes, and
 asked

As low as when you speak to mourners
 new

Of those they cannot bear yet to call
 dead,

" If Marian had as much as named to
 him

A certain Rose, an early friend of hers,
 A ruined creature."

" Never."—Starting up

He strode from side to side about the
 room,

Most like some prisoned lion sprung
 awake,

Who has felt the desert sting him
 through his dreams.

" What was I to her, that she should
 tell me aught ?

A friend ! was I a friend ? I see all clear.
 Such devils would pull angels out of heaven,
 Provided they could reach them ; it's their pride ;
 And that's the odds 'twixt soul and body-plague !
 The veriest slave who drops in Cairo's street,
 Cries, ' Stand off from me, ' to the passengers ;
 While these blotched souls are eager to infect,
 And blow their bad breath in a sister's face
 As if they got some ease by it."
 I broke through.
 " Some natures catch no plagues.
 I've read of babes
 Found whole and sleeping by the spotted breast
 Of one a full day dead. I hold it true
 As I'm a woman and know womanhood,
 That Marian Erle, however lured from place,
 Deceived in way, keeps pure in aim and heart,
 As snow that's drifted from the garden-bank
 To the open road."
 'Twas hard to hear him laugh.
 " The figure's happy. Well—a dozen carts
 And tramps will secure you presently
 A fine white snow-drift. Leave it there, your snow !
 'Twill pass for soot ere sunset. Pure in aim ?
 She's pure in aim, I grant you,—like myself,
 Who thought to take the world upon my back
 To carry it o'er a chasm of social ill,
 And end by letting slip through impotence
 A single soul, a child's weight in a soul,
 Straight down the pit of hell ! yes, I and she
 Have reason to be proud of our pure aims."
 Then softly, as the last repenting drops
 Of a thunder-shower, he added, " The poor child ;

Poor Marian ! 'twas a luckless day for her,
 When first she chanced on my philanthropy."

He drew a chair beside me, and sate down ;
 And I, instinctively, as women use
 Before a sweet friend's grief,—when, in his ear,
 They hum the tune of comfort, though themselves

Most ignorant of the special words of such,
 And quiet so and fortify his brain
 And give it time and strength for feeling out
 To reach the availing sense beyond that sound,—
 Went murmuring to him, what, if written here,
 Would seem not much, yet fetched him better help
 Than, peradventure, if it had been more.

I've known the pregnant thinkers of this time,
 And stood by breathless, hanging on their lips,
 When some chromatic sequence of fine thought

In learned modulation phrased itself
 To an unconjectured harmony of truth.

And yet I've been more moved, more raised, I say,
 By a simple word . . . a broken easy thing,

A three-years' infant might say after you,—

A look, a sigh, a touch upon the palm,
 Which meant less than " I love you " . . . than by all

The full-voiced rhetoric of those master-mouths.

" Ah, dear Aurora," he began at last,
 His pale lips fumbling for a sort of smile,

" Your printer's devils have not spoilt your heart :

That's well. And who knows but, long years ago,

When you and I talked, you were somewhat right

In being so peevish with me? You, at least,
 Have ruined no one through your dreams! Instead,
 You've helped the facile youth to live youth's day
 With innocent distraction, still perhaps
 Suggestive of things better than your rhymes.
 The little shepherd-maiden, eight years old,
 I've seen upon the mountains of Vaucluse,
 Asleep i' the sun, her head upon her knees,
 The flocks all scattered,—is more laudable
 Than any sheep-dog trained imperfectly,
 Who bites the kids through too much zeal."

"I look
 As if I had slept, then?"

He was touched at once
 By something in my face. Indeed 'twas sure
 That he and I,—despite a year or two
 Of younger life on my side, and on his,
 The heaping of the years' work on the days,—
 The three-hour speeches from the member's seat,
 The hot committees, in and out the House,
 The pamphlets, "Arguments," "Collective Views,"
 Tossed out as straw before sick houses,
 just
 To show one's sick and so be trod to dirt,
 And no more use,—through this world's underground,
 The burrowing, groping effort, whence the arm
 And heart come bleeding,—sure, that he and I
 Were, after all, unequally fatigued!
 That he, in his developed manhood, stood
 A little sunburnt by the glare of life;
 While I . . . it seemed no sun had shone on me,
 So many seasons I had forgot my Springs;

My cheeks had pined and perished from their orbs,
 And all the youth-blood in them had grown white
 As dew on autumn cyclamens: alone
 My eyes and forehead answered for my face.

He said . . . "Aurora, you are changed—are ill!"

"Not so, my cousin,—only not asleep!"

I answered, smiling gently. "Let it be.

You scarcely found the poet of Vaucluse

As drowsy as the shepherds. What is art,

But life upon the larger scale, the higher,

When, graduating up in a spiral line
 Of still expanding and ascending gyres,

It pushes toward the intense significance

Of all things, hungry for the Infinite?
 Art's life,—and where we live, we suffer and toil."

He seemed to sift me with his painful eyes.

"Alas! you take it gravely; you refuse

Your dreamland, right of common, and green rest.

You break the mythic turf where danced the nymphs,

With crooked ploughs of actual life,—let in

The axes to the legendary woods,
 To pay the head-tax. You are fallen indeed

On evil days, you poets, if yourselves
 Can praise that art of yours no other-

wise;

And, if you cannot . . . better take a trade

And be of use! 'twere cheaper for your youth."

"Of use!" I softly echoed, "there's the point

We sweep about for ever in argument;
 Like swallows, which the exasperate,

dying year
 Sets spinning in black circles, round and round,

Preparing for far flights o'er unknown seas.

And we . . . where tend we ? "

" Where ? " he said, and sighed.

" The whole creation, from the hour we are born,

Perplexes us with questions. Not a stone

But cries behind us, every weary step,
' Where, where ? ' I leave stones to reply to stones.

Enough for me and for my fleshly heart

To hearken the invocations of my kind,
When men catch hold upon my shuddering nerves

And shriek, ' What help ? what hope ?
what bread i' the house,

' What fire i' the frost ? ' There must be some response,

Though mine fail utterly. This social Sphinx,

Who sits between the sepulchres and stews,

Makes mock and mow against the crystal heavens,

And bullies God,—exacts a word at least

From each man standing on the side of God,

However paying a sphinx-price for it. We pay it also if we hold our peace,

In pangs and pity. Let me speak and die.

Alas ! you'll say, I speak and kill, instead."

I pressed in there ; " The best men, doing their best,

Know peradventure least of what they do :

Men usefullest i' the world, are simply used ;

The nail that holds the wood, must pierce it first,

And He alone Who wields the hammer, sees

The work advanced by the earliest blow. Take heart."

" Ah, if I could have taken yours ! " he said,

" But that's past now." Then rising . . . " I will take

At least your kindness and encouragement.

I thank you. Dear, be happy. Sing your songs,

If that's your way ! but sometimes slumber too,

Nor tire too much with following, out of breath,

The rhymes upon your mountains of Delight.

Reflect, if Art be, in truth, the higher life,

You need the lower life to stand upon, In order to reach up into that higher ;

And none can stand a-tiptoe in the place

He cannot stand in with two stable feet.

Remember then !—for Art's sake, hold your life."

We parted so. I held him in respect. I comprehended what he was in heart

And sacrificial greatness. Ay, but *he* Supposed me a thing too small to

deign to know :

He blew me, plainly, from the crucible, As some intruding, interrupting fly

Not worth the pains of his analysis Absorbed on nobler subjects. Hurt

a fly !

He would not for the world : he's pitiful

To flies even. " Sing," says he, "and tease me still,

If that's your way, poor insect." That's your way !

FIFTH BOOK

AURORA LEIGH, be humble. Shall I hope

To speak my poems in mysterious tune

With man and nature,—with the lavalymph

That trickles from successive galaxies Still drop by drop adown the finger

of God,

In still new worlds ?—with summer-days in this,

That scarce dare breathe, they are so beautiful ?—

With spring's delicious trouble in the ground

Tormented by the quickened blood of roots,

And softly pricked by golden crocus-sheaves

In token of the harvest-time of
 flowers?—
 With winters and with autumns,—
 and beyond,
 With the human heart's large seasons,
 —when it hopes
 And fears, joys, grieves, and loves?—
 with all that strain
 Of sexual passion, which devours the
 flesh
 In a sacrament of souls? with
 mother's breasts,
 Which, round the new-made crea-
 tures hanging there,
 Throb luminous and harmonious like
 pure spheres?—
 With multitudinous life, and finally
 With the great out-goings of ecstatic
 souls,
 Who, in a rush of too long prisoned
 flame,
 Their radiant faces upward, burn
 away
 This dark of the body, issuing on a
 world
 Beyond our mortal?—can I speak
 my verse
 So plainly in tune to these things and
 the rest,
 That men shall feel it catch them on
 the quick,
 As having the same warrant over
 them
 To hold and move them, if they will
 or no,
 Alike imperious as the primal rhythm
 Of that theurgic nature? I must fail,
 Who fail at the beginning to hold and
 move
 One man,—and he my cousin, and he
 my friend,
 And he born tender, made intelligent,
 Inclined to ponder the precipitous
 sides
 Of difficult questions; yet, obtuse to
 me,—
 Of me, incurious! likes me very well,
 And wishes me a paradise of good,
 Good looks, good means, and good
 digestion!—ay,
 But otherwise evades me, puts me off
 With kindness, with a tolerant gentle-
 ness,—
 Too light a book for a grave man's
 reading! Go,
 Aurora Leigh: be humble.

There it is;
 We women are too apt to look to one,
 Which proves a certain impotence in
 art.
 We strain our natures at doing some-
 thing great,
 Far less because it's something great
 to do,
 Than, haply, that we, so, commend
 ourselves
 As being not small, and more appre-
 ciable
 To some one friend. We must have
 mediators
 Betwixt our highest conscience and
 the judge;
 Some sweet saint's blood must
 quicken in our palms,
 Or all the life in heaven seems slow
 and cold:
 Good only, being perceived as the end
 of good,
 And God alone pleased,—that's too
 poor, we think,
 And not enough for us, by any means.
 Ay—Romney, I remember, told me
 once
 We miss the abstract, when we com-
 prehend!
 We miss it most when we aspire . . .
 and fail.
 Yet so, I will not.—This vile woman's
 way
 Of trailing garments, shall not trip
 me up.
 I'll have no traffic with the personal
 thought
 In art's pure temple. Must I work
 in vain,
 Without the approbation of a man?
 It cannot be; it shall not. Fame
 itself,
 That approbation of the general race,
 Presents a poor end (though the
 arrow speed,
 Shot straight with vigorous finger to
 the white),
 And the highest fame was never
 reached except
 By what was aimed above it. Art
 for art,
 And good for God Himself, the essen-
 tial Good!
 We'll keep our aims sublime, our eyes
 erect,

Although our woman-hands should
shake and fail ;

And if we fail . . . But must we ?—
Shall I fail ?

The Greeks said grandly in their
tragic phrase,

" Let no one be called happy till his
death."

To which I add,—Let no one till his
death

Be called unhappy. Measure not the
work

Until the day's out and the labour
done ;

Then bring your gauges. If the
day's work's scant,

Why, call it scant ; affect no com-
promise ;

And, in that we have nobly striven at
least,

Deal with us nobly, women though
we be,

And honour us with truth, if not with
praise.

My ballads prospered ; but the bal-
lad's race

Is rapid for a poet who bears weights
Of thought and golden image. He
can stand

Like Atlas, in the sonnet,—and sup-
port

His own heavens pregnant with dy-
nastic stars ;

But then he must stand still, nor take
a step.

In that descriptive poem called " The
Hills,"

The prospects were too far and in-
distinct.

'Tis true my critics said, " A fine
view, that !"

The public scarcely cared to climb
the book

For even the finest ; and the public's
right,

A tree's mere firewood, unless human-
ised ;

Which well the Greeks knew, when
they stirred the bark

With close-pressed bosoms of sub-
siding nymphs,

And made the forest-rivers garrulous
With babble of gods. For us, we are
called to mark

A still more intimate humanity
In this inferior nature,—or, ourselves,
Must fall like dead leaves trodden
underfoot

By veritabler artists. Earth, shut up
By Adam, like a fakir in a box
Left too long buried, remained stiff
and dry,

A mere dumb corpse, till Christ the
Lord came down,

Unlocked the doors, forced open the
blank eyes,

And used His kingly chrisms to
straighten out

The leathery tongue turned back into
the throat :

Since when, she lives, remembers,
palpitates

In every limb, aspires in every breath,
Embraces infinite relations. Now,

We want no half-gods, Panomphæan
Joves,

Fauns, Naiads, Tritons, Orcads and
the rest,

To take possession of a senseless world
To unnatural vampire-uses. See the
earth,

The body of our body, the green earth,
Indubitably human, like this flesh

And these articulated veins through
which

Our heart drives blood ! there's not a
flower of spring,

That dies ere June, but vaunts itself
allied

By issue and symbol, by significance
And correspondence, to that spirit-
world

Outside the limits of our space and
time,

Whereto we are bound. Let poets
give it voice

With human meanings ; else they miss
the thought,

And henceforth step down lower,
stand confessed

Instructed poorly for interpreters,—
Thrown out by an easy cowslip in the
text.

Even so my pastoral failed : it was a
book

Of surface-pictures—pretty, cold,
and false

With literal transcript,—the worse
done, I think,

For being not ill-done. Let me set
 my mark
 Against such doings, and do other-
 wise.
 This strikes me.—If the public whom
 we know,
 Could catch me at such admissions, I
 should pass
 For being right modest. Yet how
 proud we are,
 In daring to look down upon our-
 selves!

The critics say that epics have died
 out
 With Agamemnon and the goat-
 nursed gods—
 I'll not believe it. I could never
 dream,
 As Payne Knight did (the mythic
 mountaineer
 Who travelled higher than he was
 born to live,
 And showed sometimes the goitre in
 his throat
 Discoursing of an image seen through
 fog),
 That Homer's heroes measured twelve
 feet high.
 They were but men!—his Helen's
 hair turned grey
 Like any plain Miss Smith's, who
 wears a front ;
 And Hector's infant blubbered at a
 plume
 As yours last Friday at a turkey-cock.
 All men are possible heroes : every
 age,
 Heroic in proportions, double-faced,
 Looks backward and before, expects
 a morn
 And claims an epos.

Ay, but every age
 Appears to souls who live in it (ask
 Carlyle)
 Most unheroic. Ours, for instance,
 ours!
 The thinkers scout it, and the poets
 abound
 Who scorn to touch it with a finger-
 tip :
 A pewter age,—mixed metal, silver-
 washed ;
 An age of scum, spooned off the richer
 past ;
 An age of patches for old gaberdines ;

An age of mere transition, meaning
 nought,
 Except that what succeeds must
 shame it quite,
 If God please. That's wrong think-
 ing, to my mind,
 And wrong thoughts make poor
 poems.

Every age,
 Through being beheld too close, is ill-
 discerned
 By those who have not lived past it.
 We'll suppose
 Mount Athos carved, as Persian
 Xerxes schemed,
 To some colossal statue of a man :
 The peasants, gathering brushwood
 in his ear,
 Had guessed as little of any human
 form
 Up there, as would a flock of brows-
 ing goats.
 They'd have, in fact, to travel ten
 miles off
 Or ere the giant image broke on
 them,
 Full human profile, nose and chin dis-
 tinct,
 Mouth, muttering rhythms of silence
 up the sky,
 And fed at evening with the blood of
 suns ;
 Grand torso,—hand, that flung per-
 petually
 The largesse of a silver river down
 To all the country pastures. 'Tis
 even thus
 With times we live in,—evermore too
 great
 To be apprehended near.

But poets should
 Exert a double vision ; should have
 eyes
 To see near things as comprehensively
 As if afar they took their point of
 sight,
 And distant things, as intimately deep,
 As if they touched them. Let us
 strive for this.
 I do distrust the poet who discerns
 No character or glory in his times,
 And trundles back his soul five hun-
 dred years,
 Past moat and drawbridge, into a
 castle-court,
 Oh not to sing of lizards or of toads

Alive i' the ditch there !—'twere excusable ;
 But of some black chief, half knight,
 half sheep-lifter,
 Some beauteous dame, half chattel
 and half queen,
 As dead as must be, for the greater
 part,
 The poems made on their chivalric
 bones.
 And that's no wonder : death inherits
 death.

Nay, if there's room for poets in this
 world

A little overgrown (I think there is),
 Their sole work is to represent the age,
 Their age, not Charlemagne's,—this
 live, throbbing age,
 That brawls, cheats, maddens, calcu-
 lates, aspires,
 And spends more passion, more heroic
 heat,
 Betwixt the mirrors of its drawing-
 rooms,
 Than Roland with his knights, at
 Roncesvalles.
 To flinch from modern varnish, coat
 or founce,
 Cry out for togas and the picturesque,
 Is fatal,—foolish too. King Arthur's
 self
 Was commonplace to Lady Guenever ;
 And Camelot to minstrels seemed as
 flat
 As Regent Street to poets.

Never flinch,
 But still, unscrupulously epic, catch
 Upon the burning lava of a song,
 The full-veined, heaving, double-
 breasted Age :
 That, when the next shall come, the
 men of that
 May touch the impress with reverent
 hand, and say
 " Behold,—behold the paps we all
 have sucked !
 That bosom seems to beat still, or at
 least
 It sets ours beating. This is living
 art,
 Which thus presents, and thus re-
 cords true life."

What form is best for poems ? Let
 me think

Of forms less, and the external. Trust
 the spirit,
 As sovran nature does, to make the
 form ;

For otherwise we only imprison spirit,
 And not embody. Inward evermore
 To outward,—so in life, and so in art,
 Which still is life.

Five acts to make a play.
 And why not fifteen ? why not ten ?
 or seven ?

What matter for the number of the
 leaves,

Supposing the tree lives and grows ?
 exact

The literal unities of time and place,
 When 'tis the essence of passion to
 ignore

Both time and place ? Absurd.

Keep up the fire,
 And leave the generous flames to
 shape themselves.

'Tis true the stage requires obsequi-
 ousness

To this or that convention ; " exit "
 here

And " enter " there ; the points for
 clapping, fixed,

Like Jacob's white-peeled rods before
 the rams :

And all the close-curved imagery
 clipped

In manner of their fleece at shearing-
 time.

Forget to prick the galleries to the
 heart

Precisely at the fourth act,—culmin-
 ate

Our five pyramidal acts with one act
 more,—

We're lost so ! Shakspeare's ghost
 could scarcely plead

Against our just damnation. Stand
 aside ;

We'll muse for comfort that, last
 century,

On this same tragic stage on which we
 have failed,

A wigless Hamlet would have failed
 the same.

And whosoever writes good poetry,
 Looks just to art. He does not
 write for you

Orme,—for London or for Edinburgh ;

He will not suffer the best critic
 known
 To step into his sunshine of free
 thought
 And self-absorbed conception, and
 exact
 An inch-long swerving of the holy
 lines.
 If virtue done for popularity
 Defiles like vice, can art for praise or
 hire
 Still keep its splendour, and remain
 pure art ?
 Eschew such serfdom. What the
 poet writes,
 He writes : mankind accepts it, if it
 suits,
 And that's success : if not, the poem's
 passed
 From hand to hand, and yet from
 hand to hand,
 Until the unborn snatch it, crying out
 In pity on their fathers' being so dull,
 And that's success too.
 I will write no plays.
 Because the drama, less sublime in
 this,
 Makes lower appeals, defends more
 menially,
 Adopts the standard of the public
 taste
 To chalk its height on, wears a dog-
 chain round
 Its regal neck, and learns to carry and
 fetch
 The fashions of the day to please the
 day ;
 Fawns close on pit and boxes, who
 clap hands,
 Commending chiefly its docility
 And humour in stage-tricks ; or else
 indeed
 Gets hissed at, howled at, stamped at
 like a dog,
 Or worse, we'll say. For dogs, un-
 justly kicked,
 Yell, bite at need ; but if your drama-
 tist
 (Being wronged by some five hundred
 nobodies
 Because their grosser brains most
 naturally
 Misjudge the fineness of his subtle
 wit)
 Shows teeth an almond's breadth,
 protests the length

Of a modest phrase,—“ My gentle
 countrymen,
 There's something in it, haply, of
 your fault,”—
 Why then, besides five hundred no-
 bodies,
 He'll have five thousand, and five
 thousand more,
 Against him,—the whole public,—all
 the hoofs
 Of King Saul's father's asses, in full
 drove,—
 And obviously deserve it. He ap-
 pealed
 To these,—and why say more if they
 condemn,
 Than if they praised him ?—Weep,
 my Æschylus,
 But low and far, upon Sicilian shores !
 For since 'twas Athens (so I read the
 myth)
 Who gave commission to that fatal
 weight,
 The tortoise, cold and hard, to drop
 on thee
 And crush thee,—better cover thy
 bald head ;
 She'll hear the softest hum of Hy-
 blan bee
 Before thy loudest protestation.
 Then
 The risk's still worse upon the modern
 stage :
 I could not, in so little, accept success,
 Nor would I risk so much, in ease and
 calm,
 For manifest gains ; let those who
 prize,
 Pursue them : I stand off.
 And yet, forbid,
 That any irreverent fancy or conceit
 Should litter in the Drama's throne-
 room, where
 The rulers of our heart, in whose full
 veins
 Dynastic glories mingle, sit in strength
 And do their kingly work,—conceive,
 command,
 And, from the imagination's crucial
 heat,
 Catch up their men and women all
 afame
 For action, all alive, and forced to
 prove
 Their life by living out heart, brain,
 and nerve,

Until mankind makes witness, "These
 be men
 As we are," and vouchsafes the kiss
 that's due
 To Imogen and Juliet—sweetest kin
 On art's side.
 'Tis that, honouring to its worth
 The drama, I would fear to keep it
 down
 To the level of the footlights. Dies
 no more
 The sacrificial goat, for Bacchus
 slain,—
 His filmed eyes fluttered by the whirl-
 ing white
 Of choral vestures, troubled in his
 blood,
 While tragic voices that clanged
 keen as swords,
 Leapt high together with the altar-
 flame,
 And made the blue air wink. The
 waxen mask,
 Which set the grand still front of
 Themis' son
 Upon the puckered visage of a
 player;—
 The buskin, which he rose upon and
 moved,
 As some tall ship, first conscious of
 the wind,
 Sweeps slowly past the piers;—the
 mouthpiece, where
 The mere man's voice with all its
 breaths and breaks
 Went sheathed in brass, and clashed
 on even heights
 Its phrased thunders;—these things
 are no more,
 Which once were. And concluding,
 which is clear,
 The growing drama has outgrown
 such toys
 Of simulated stature, face, and speech,
 It also, peradventure, may outgrow
 The simulation of the painted scene,
 Boards, actors, prompters, gaslight,
 and costume;
 And take for a worthier stage the soul
 itself,
 Its shifting fancies and celestial lights,
 With all its grand orchestral silences
 To keep the pauses of the rhythmic
 sounds.
 Alas, I still see something to be done,

And what I do falls short of what I see
 Though I waste myself on doing.
 Long green days,
 Worn bare of grass and sunshine,—
 long calm nights,
 From which the silken sleeps were
 fretted out,—
 Be witness for me, with no amateur's
 Irreverent haste and busy idleness
 I've set myself to art! What then?
 what's done?
 What's done, at last?
 Behold, at last, a book.
 If life-blood's necessary,—which it is,
 (By that blue vein athrob on Maho-
 met's brow,
 Each prophet-poet's book must show
 man's blood!)
 If life-blood's fertilising, I wrung
 mine
 On every leaf of this,—unless the
 drops
 Slid heavily on one side and left it
 dry.
 That chances often: many a fervid
 man
 Writes books as cold and flat as grave-
 yard stones
 From which the lichen's scraped;
 and if St. Preux
 Had written his own letters, as he
 might,
 We had never wept to think of the
 little mole
 'Neath Julie's drooping eyelid. Pas-
 sion is
 But something suffered, after all.
 While Art
 Sets action on the top of suffering:
 The artist's part is both to be and
 do,
 Transfixing with a special, central
 power
 The flat experience of the common
 man,
 And turning outward, with a sudden
 wrench,
 Half agony, half ecstasy, the thing
 He feels the inmost: never felt the
 less
 Because he sings it. Does a torch
 less burn
 For burning next reflectors of blue
 steel,
 That he should be the colder for his
 place

'Twixt two incessant fires,—his personal life's,
 And that intense refraction which
 burns back
 Perpetually against him from the
 round
 Of crystal conscience he was born into
 If artist-born? O sorrowful great
 gift
 Conferred on poets, of a twofold life,
 When one life has been found enough
 for pain!
 We, staggering 'neath our burden as
 mere men,
 Being called to stand up straight as
 demi-gods,
 Support the intolerable strain and
 stress
 Of the universal, and send clearly up
 With voices broken by the human
 sob,
 Our poems to find rhymes among the
 stars!

But soft!—a "poet" is a word soon
 said;
 A book's a thing soon written. Nay,
 indeed,
 The more the poet shall be question-
 able,
 The more unquestionably comes his
 book!
 And this of mine—well, granting to
 myself
 Some passion in it, frowning up the
 flats,
 Mere passion will not prove a volume
 worth
 Its gall and rags even. Bubbles
 round a keel
 Mean nought, excepting that the ves-
 sel moves.
 There's more than passion goes to
 make a man,
 Or book, which is a man too.

I am sad.
 I wonder if Pygmalion had these
 doubts,
 And, feeling the hard marble first
 relent,
 Grow supple to the straining of his
 arms,
 And tingle through its cold to his
 burning lip,
 Supposed his senses mocked, and that
 the toil

Of stretching past the known and
 seen, to reach
 The archetypal Beauty out of sight,
 Had made his heart beat fast enough
 for two,
 And with his own life dazed and
 blinded him!
 Not so; Pygmalion loved,—and whoso
 loves
 Believes the impossible.

And I am sad:
 I cannot thoroughly love a work of
 mine,
 Since none seems worthy of my
 thought and hope
 More highly mated. He has shot
 them down,
 My Phœbus Apollo, soul within my
 soul,
 Who judges, by the attempted, what's
 attained,
 And with the silver arrow from his
 height,
 Has struck down all my works before
 my face,
 While I said nothing. Is there aught
 to say?
 I called the artist but a greatedened
 man:
 He may be childless also, like a man.

I laboured on alone. The wind and
 dust
 And sun of the world beat blistering
 in my face;
 And hope, now for me, now against
 me, dragged
 My spirits onward,—as some fallen
 balloon,
 Which, whether caught by blossom-
 ing tree or bare,
 Is torn alike. I sometimes touched
 my aim,
 Or seemed,—and generous souls cried
 out, "Be strong,
 Take courage; now you're on our
 level,—now!
 The next step saves you!" I was
 flushed with praise,
 But, pausing just a moment to draw
 breath,
 I could not choose but murmur to
 myself
 "Is this all? all that's done? and all
 that's gained?
 If this then be success, 'tis dismaller

Than any failure."

O my God, my God,
O supreme Artist, Who as sole return
For all the cosmic wonder of Thy
work,

Demandest of us just a word . . . a
name,

"My Father!"—Thou hast know-
ledge, only Thou,

How dreary 'tis for women to sit still
On winter nights by solitary fires,
And hear the nations praising them
far off,

Too far! ay, praising our quick sense
of love,

Our very heart of passionate woman-
hood,

Which could not beat so in the verse
without

Being present also in the un-kissed lips,
And eyes undried because there's
none to ask

The reason they grew moist.

To sit alone,

And think, for comfort, how, that
very night,

Affianced lovers, leaning face to face
With sweet half-listenings for each
other's breath,

Are reading haply from some page of
ours,

To pause with a thrill, as if their
cheeks had touched,

When such a stanza, level to their
mood,

Seems floating their own thought out
—"So I feel

For thee,"—"And I, for thee: this
poet knows

What everlasting love is!"—how,
that night,

A father, issuing from the misty roads
Upon the luminous round of lamp
and hearth

And happy children, having caught
up first

The youngest there until it shrunk
and shrieked

To feel the cold chin prick its dimples
through

With winter from the hills, may throw
i' the lap

Of the eldest (who has learnt to drop
her lids

To hide some sweetness newer than
last year's)

Our book and cry, . . . "Ah you,
you care for rhymes;

So here be rhymes to pore on under
trees,

When April comes to let you! I've
been told

They are not idle as so many are,
But set hearts beating pure as well as
fast:

It's yours, the book: I'll write your
name in it,—

That so you may not lose, however
lost

In poet's lore and charming reverie,
The thought of how your father

thought of *you*
In riding from the town."

To have our books

Appraised by love, associated with
love,

While *we* sit loveless! is it hard, you
think?

At least 'tis mournful. Fame, indeed,
'twas said,

Means simply love. It was a man
said that.

And then, there's love and love: the
love of all

(To risk, in turn, a woman's paradox.)
Is but a small thing to the love of one.

You bid a hungry child be satisfied
With a heritage of many corn-fields:

ay,
He says he's hungry,—he would
rather have

That little barley-cake you keep from
him

While reckoning up his harvests. So
with us;

(Here, Romney, too, we fail to gener-
alise!)

We're hungry.

Hungry! but it's pitiful

To wail like unweaned babes and suck
our thumbs

Because we're hungry. Who, in all
this world

(Wherein we are haply set to pray and
fast,

And learn what good is by its oppo-
site)

Has never hungered? Woe to him
who has found

The meal enough! if Ugolino's full,
His teeth have crunched some foul

unnatural thing:

For here satiety proves penury
 More utterly irremediable. And since
 We needs must hunger,—better, for
 man's love,
 Than God's truth! better, for com-
 panions sweet,
 Than great convictions! let us bear
 our weights,
 Preferring dreary hearths to desert
 souls.
 Well, well! they say we're envious,
 we who rhyme;
 But I, because I am a woman perhaps,
 And so rhyme ill, am ill at envy-
 ing.
 I never envied Graham his breadth of
 style,
 Which gives you, with a random
 smutch or two
 (Near-sighted critics analyse to
 smutch),
 Such delicate perspectives of full life;
 Nor Belmore, for the unity of aim
 To which he cuts his cedarn poems,
 fine
 As sketchers do their pencils; nor
 Mark Gage,
 For that caressing colour and tranc-
 ing tone
 Whereby you're swept away and
 melted in
 The sensual element, which, with a
 back wave,
 Restores you to the level of pure souls
 And leaves you with Plotinus. None
 of these,
 For native gifts or popular applause,
 I've envied; but for this,—that
 when, by chance,
 Says some one,—“There goes Bel-
 more, a great man!
 He leaves clean work behind him, and
 requires
 No sweeper up of the chips,” . . . a
 girl I know,
 Who answers nothing, save with her
 brown eyes,
 Smiles unaware, as if a guardian saint
 Smiled in her:—for this, too,—that
 Gage comes home
 And lays his last book's prodigal
 review
 Upon his mother's knees, where,
 years ago,
 He had laid his childish spelling-
 book and learned

To chirp and peck the letters from
 her mouth,
 As young birds must. “Well done,”
 she murmured then,
 She will not say it now more wonder-
 ingly;
 And yet the last “Well done” will
 touch him more,
 As catching up to-day and yesterday
 In a perfect chord of love; and so,
 Mark Gage,
 I envy you your mother!—and you,
 Graham,
 Because you have a wife who loves
 you so,
 She half forgets, at moments, to be
 proud
 Of being Graham's wife, until a friend
 observes,
 “The boy here, has his father's
 massive brow,
 Done small in wax . . . if we push
 back the curls.”

Who loves *me*? Dearest father,—
 mother sweet,—
 I speak the names out sometimes by
 myself,
 And make the silence shiver: they
 sound strange,
 As Hindostanee to an Ind-born
 man
 Accustomed many years to English
 speech;
 Or lovely poet-words grown obsolete,
 Which will not leave off singing. Up
 in heaven
 I have my father,—with my mother's
 face
 Beside him in a blotch of heavenly
 light;
 No more for earth's familiar, house-
 hold use,
 No more! The best verse written
 by this hand,
 Can never reach them where they
 sit, to seem
 Well-done to *them*. Death quite
 unfellows us,
 Sets dreadful odds betwixt the live
 and dead,
 And makes us part as those at
 Babel did,
 Through sudden ignorance of a
 common tongue.
 A living Cæsar would not dare to play

At bowls, with such as my dead
father is.

And yet, this may be less so than
appears,

This change and separation. Spar-
rows five

For just two farthings, and God cares
for each.

If God is not too great for little
cares,

Is any creature, because gone to God?
I've seen some 'men, veracious, no-
wise mad,

Who have thought or dreamed, de-
clared and testified,

They've heard the Dead a-ticking
like a clock

Which strikes the hours of the
eternities,

Beside them, with their natural ears,
—and known

That human spirits feel the human
way,

And hate the unreasoning awe which
waves them off

From possible communion. It may be.

At least, earth separates as well as
heaven.

For instance, I have not seen Rom-
ney Leigh

Full eighteen months . . . add six,
you get two years.

They say he's very busy with good
works,—

Has parted Leigh Hall into alms-
houses.

He made an almshouse of his heart
one day,

Which ever since is loose upon the
latch

For those who pull the string.—I
never did.

It always makes me sad to go abroad;
And now I'm sadder that I went to-
night

Among the lights and talkers at
Lord Howe's.

His wife is gracious, with her glossy
braids,

And even voice, and gorgeous eye-
balls, calm

As her other jewels, If she's some-
what cold,

B.P.

Who wonders, when her blood has
stood so long

In the ducal reservoir she calls her
line

By no means arrogantly? she's not
proud;

Not prouder than the swan is of the
lake

He has always swum in,—'tis her
element,

And so she takes it with a natural
grace,

Ignoring tadpoles. She just knows,
perhaps,

There *are* men, move on without
outriders,

Which isn't her fault. Ah, to watch
her face,

When good Lord Howe expounds
his theories

Of social justice and equality—
'Tis curious, what a tender, tolerant
bend

Her neck takes: for she loves him,
like his talk,

"Such clever talk—that dear, odd
Algernon!"

She listens on, exactly as if he talked
Some Scandinavian myth of Lemures,
Too pretty to dispute, and too absurd.

She's gracious to me as her husband's
friend,

And would be gracious, were I not a
Leigh,

Being used to smile just so, without
her eyes,

On Joseph Strangways, the Leeds
mesmerist,

And Delia Dobbs, the lecturer from
"the States"

Upon the "Woman's Question."
Then, for him,

I like him . . . he's my friend. And
all the rooms

Were full of crinkling silks that
swept about

The fine dust of most subtle courtesies.
What then?—why then, we come
home to be sad.

How lovely One I love not, looked
to-night!

She's very pretty, Lady Waldemar.
Her maid must use both hands to
twist that coil

F F

Of tresses, then be careful lest the rich
Bronze rounds should slip:—she
missed, though, a grey hair,
A single one,—I saw it; otherwise
The woman looked immortal. How
they told,
Those alabaster shoulders and bare
breasts,
On which the pearls, drowned out of
sight in milk,
Were lost, excepting for the ruby-
clasp!
They split the amaranth velvet-
bodice down
To the waist, or nearly, with the
audacious press
Of full-breathed beauty. If the
heart within
Were half as white!—but, if it were,
perhaps
The breast were closer covered, and
the sight
Less aspectable, by half, too.

I heard
The young man with the German
student's look—
A sharp face, like a knife in a cleft
stick,
Which shot up straight against the
parting line
So equally dividing the long hair,—
Say softly to his neighbour (thirty-
five
And mediæval), "Look that way,
Sir Blaise.
She's Lady Waldemar—to the left,—
in red—
Whom Romney Leigh, our ablest
man just now,
Is soon about to marry."

Then replied
Sir Blaise Delorme, with quiet, priest-
like voice,
Too used to syllable damnations
round
To make a natural emphasis worth
while:
"Is Leigh your ablest man? the
same, I think,
Once jilted by a recreant pretty maid
Adopted from the people? Now, in
change,
He seems to have plucked a flower
from the other side
Of the social hedge."

"A flower, a flower," exclaimed

My German student,—his own eyes
full-blown
Bent on her. He was twenty,
certainly.

Sir Blaise resumed with gentle
arrogance,
As if he had dropped his alms into a
hat,
And had the right to counsel,—“My
young friend,
I doubt your ablest man's ability
To get the least good or help meet
for him,
For pagan phalanstery or Christian
home,
From such a flowery creature.”
“Beautiful!”
My student murmured, rapt,—
“Mark how she stirs!
Just waves her head, as if a flower
indeed,
Touched far off by the vain breath
of our talk.”

At which that bilious Grimwald (he
who writes
For the Renovator), who had seemed
absorbed
Upon the table-book of autographs
(I dare say mentally he crunched the
bones
Of all those writers, wishing them
alive
To feel his tooth in earnest), turned
short round
With low carnivorous laugh,—“A
flower, of course!
She neither sews nor spins,—and
takes no thought
Of her garments . . . falling off.”

The student flinched,
Sir Blaise, the same; then both,
drawing back their chairs
As if they spied black-beetles on the
floor,
Pursued their talk, without a word
being thrown
To the critic,
Good Sir Blaise's brow is high
And noticeably narrow: a strong
wind,
You fancy, might unroof him sud-
denly,
And blow that great top attic off his
head

So piled with feudal relics. You admire
 His nose in profile, though you miss
 his chin;
 But, though you miss his chin, you
 seldom miss
 His golden cross worn innermost (carved)
 For penance, by a saintly Styrian
 monk
 Whose flesh was too much with him),
 slipping through
 Some unaware unbuttoned casualty
 Of the under-waistcoat. With an
 absent air
 Sir Blaise sate fingering it and speak-
 ing low,
 While I, upon the sofa, heard it all.

"My dear young friend, if we could
 bear our eyes
 Like blessedest St. Lucy, on a plate,
 They would not trick us into choosing
 wives,
 As doublets, by the colour. Other-
 wise
 Our fathers chose,—and therefore,
 when they had hung
 Their household keys about a lady's
 waist,
 The sense of duty gave her dignity:
 She kept her bosom holy to her
 babes;
 And, if a moralist reproved her dress,
 'Twas, 'Too much starch!'—and
 not, 'Too little lawn!'"

"Now, pshaw!" returned the other
 in a heat,
 A little fretted by being called
 "young friend,"
 Or so I took it,—"for St. Lucy's
 sake,
 If she's the saint to curse by, let us
 leave
 Our fathers,—plagued enough about
 our sons!"
 (He stroked his beardless chin) "yes,
 plagued, sir, plagued:
 The future generations lie on us
 As heavy as the nightmare of a seer;
 Our meat and drink grow painful pro-
 phecy:
 I ask you,—have we leisure, if we
 liked,
 To hollow out our weary hands to keep

Your intermittent rushlight of the
 past
 From draughts in lobbies? Preju-
 dice of sex,
 And marriage-laws . . . the socket
 drops them through
 While we two speak,—however may
 protest
 Some over-delicate nostrils, like your
 own,
 'Gainst odours thence arising."
 "You are young,"
 Sir Blaise objected.
 "If I am," he said
 With fire,—"though somewhat less
 so than I seem,
 The young run on before, and see the
 thing
 That's coming. Reverence for the
 young, I cry.
 In that new church for which the
 world's near ripe,
 You'll have the younger in the
 Elder's chair,
 Presiding with his ivory front of
 hope
 O'er foreheads clawed by cruel
 carrion-birds
 Of life's experience."
 "Pray your blessing, sir."
 Sir Blaise replied good-humouredly,
 —"I plucked
 A silver hair this morning from my
 beard,
 Which left me your inferior. Would
 I were
 Eighteen, and worthy to admonish
 you!
 If young men of your order run be-
 fore
 To see such sights as sexual preju-
 dice
 And marriage-law dissolved,—in
 plainer words,
 A general concubinage expressed
 In a universal pruriency,—the thing
 Is scarce worth running fast for, and
 you'd gain
 By loitering with your elders."
 "Ah," he said,
 "Who, getting to the top of Pisgah-
 hill,
 Can talk with one at bottom of the
 view,
 To make it comprehensible? Why,
 Leigh

Himself, although our ablest man, I
 said,
 Is scarce advanced to see as far as this,
 Which some are : he takes up imper-
 fectly
 The social question—by one handle—
 leaves
 The rest to trail. A Christian
 Socialist,
 Is Romney Leigh, you understand.”
 “Not I.
 I disbelieve in Christian-pagans,
 much
 As you in women-fishes. If we mix
 Two colours, we lose both, and make
 a third
 Distinct from either. Mark you !
 to mistake
 A colour is the sign of a sick brain,
 And mine, I thank the saints, is
 clear and cool :
 A neutral tint is here impossible.
 The church,—and by the church, I
 mean, of course,
 The catholic, apostolic, mother-
 church,—
 Draws lines as plain and straight
 as her own wall ;
 Inside of which, are Christians,
 obviously,
 And outside . . . dogs.”
 “We thank you. Well I know
 The ancient mother-church would
 fain still bite,
 For all her toothless gums,—as Leigh
 himself
 Would fain be a Christian still, for
 all his wit ;
 Pass that ; you two may settle it,
 for me.
 You’re slow in England. In a
 month I learnt
 At Göttingen, enough philosophy
 To stock your English schools for fifty
 years ;
 Pass that, too. Here, alone, I stop
 you short,
 —Supposing a true man like Leigh
 could stand
 Unequal in the stature of his life
 To the height of his opinions. Choose
 a wife
 Because of a smooth skin ?—not he,
 not he !
 He’d rail at Venus’ self for creaking
 shoes,

Unless she walked his way of right-
 eousness :
 And if he takes a Venus Meretrix
 (No imputation on the lady there),
 Be sure that, by some sleight of
 Christian art,
 He has metamorphosed and con-
 verted her
 To a Blessed Virgin.”
 “Soft !” Sir Blaise drew breath
 As if it hurt him,—“Soft ! no blas-
 phemy,
 I pray you !”
 “The first Christians did the thing ;
 Why not the last ?” asked he of
 Göttingen,
 With just that shade of sneering on the
 lip,
 Compensates for the lagging of the
 beard,—
 “And so the case is. If that fairest
 fair
 Is talked of as the future wife of Leigh,
 She’s talked of, too, at least as cer-
 tainly,
 As Leigh’s disciple. You may find
 her name
 On all his missions and commissions,
 school,
 Asylums, hospitals,—he has had her
 down,
 With other ladies whom her starry
 lead
 Persuaded from their spheres, to his
 country-place
 In Shropshire, to the famed phalan-
 stery
 At Leigh Hall, Christianised from
 Fourier’s own
 (In which he has planted out his sap-
 ling stocks
 Of knowledge into social nurseries),
 And there, they say, she has tarried
 half a week,
 And milked the cows, and churned,
 and pressed the curd,
 And said ‘my sister’ to the lowest
 drab
 Of all the assembled castaways ;
 such girls !
 Ay, sided with them at the washing-
 tub—
 Conceive, Sir Blaise, those naked
 perfect arms,
 Round glittering arms, plunged elbow-
 deep in suds,

Like wild swans hid in lilies all
a-shake."

Lord Howe came up. "What, talking poetry

So near the image of the unfavouring Muse?

That's you, Miss Leigh: I've watched you half an hour,

Precisely as I watched the statue called

A 'Pallas' in the Vatican;—you mind

The face, Sir Blaise?—intensely calm and sad,

As wisdom cut it off from fellowship.—But *that* spoke louder. Not a word from *you*!

And these two gentlemen were bold, I marked,

And unabashed by even your silence."

"Ah,"
Said I, "my dear Lord Howe, you shall not speak

To a printing woman who has lost her place

(The sweet safe corner of the household fire

Behind the heads of children), compliments,

As if she were a woman. We who have clipt

The curls before our eyes, may see at least

As plain as men do: speak out, man to man;

No compliments, beseech you."

"Friend to friend,
Let that be. We are sad to-night, I saw

(—Good-night, Sir Blaise! Ah, Smith—he has slipped away),

I saw you, across the room, and stayed, Miss Leigh,

To keep a crowd of lion-hunters off, With faces toward your jungle.

There were three;

A spacious lady, five feet ten and fat, Who has the devil in her (and there's room)

For walking to and fro upon the earth, From Chippewa to China; she requires

Your autograph upon a tinted leaf

'Twixt Queen Pomare's and Emperor Soulouque's;

Pray give it; she has energies, though fat:

For me, I'd rather see a rick on fire Than such a woman angry. Then a youth

Fresh from the backwoods, green as the under-boughs,

Asks modestly, Miss Leigh, to kiss your shoe,

And adds, he has an epic, in twelve parts,

Which when you've read, you'll do it for his boot,—

All which I saved you, and absorb next week

Both manuscript and man, because a lord

Is still more potent than a poetess, With any extreme republican. Ah,

ah,
You smile at last, then."

"Thank you."

"Leave the smile.
I'll lose the thanks for't,—ay, and throw you in

My transatlantic girl, with golden eyes,

That draws you to her splendid whiteness, as

The pistil of a water-lily draws, Adust with gold. Those girls across

the sea

Are tyrannously pretty,—and I swore

(She seemed to me an innocent, frank girl)

To bring her to you for a woman's kiss, Not now, but on some other day or week:

—We'll call it perjury; I give her up."

"No, bring her."

"Now," said he, "you make it hard

To touch such goodness with a grimy palm.

I thought to tease you well, and fret you cross,

And steel myself, when rightly vexed with you,

For telling you a thing to tease you more."

"Of Romney?"

"No, no; nothing worse," he cried,

"Of Romney Leigh, than what is
buzzed about,—

That *he* is taken in an eye-trap too,
Like many half as wise. The thing
I mean

Refers to you, not him."

"Refers to me."

He echoed,—“Me! You sound it
like a stone

Dropped down a dry well very list-
lessly,

By one who never thinks about the
toad

Alive at the bottom. Presently per-
haps

You'll sound your ‘me’ more
proudly—till I shrink.”

“Lord Howe’s the toad, then, in this
question?”

“Brief,

We’ll take it graver. Give me
sofa-room,

And quiet hearing. You know
Eglinton,

John Eglinton, of Eglinton in Kent?”

“Is *he* the toad? he’s rather like
the snail;

Known chiefly for the house upon his
back:

Divide the man and house—you kill
the man;

That’s Eglinton of Eglinton, Lord
Howe.”

He answered grave. “A reputable
man,

An excellent landlord of the olden
stamp,

If somewhat slack in new philan-
thropies;

Who keeps his birthdays with a
tenants’ dance,

Is hard upon them when they miss
the church

Or keep their children back from
catechism,

But not ungentle when the aged poor
Pick sticks at hedge-sides; nay, I’ve
heard him say,

‘The old dame has a twinge because
she stoops:

That’s punishment enough for
felony.’”

“O tender-hearted landlord! May
I take

My long lease with him, when the
time arrives

For gathering winter faggots!”

“He likes art,

Buys books and pictures . . . of a
certain kind;

Neglects no patent duty; a good
son” . . .

“To a most obedient mother. Born
to wear

His father’s shoes, he wears her hus-
band’s too:

Indeed, I’ve heard it’s touching.
Dear Lord Howe,

You shall not praise *me* so against
your heart,

When I’m at worst for praise and
faggots.”

“Be

Less bitter with me, for . . . in
short,” he said,

“I have a letter, which he urged me
so

To bring you . . . I could scarcely
choose but yield:

Insisting that a new love passing
through

The hand of an old friendship,
caught from it

Some reconciling perfume.”

“Love, you say?

My lord, I cannot love. I only find
The rhymes for love,—and that’s not
love, my lord.

Take back your letter.”

“Pause: you’ll read it first?”

“I will not read it: it is stereotyped;
The same he wrote to,—anybody’s

name,—

Anne Blythe, the actress, when she
had died so true,

A duchess fainted in a private box:
Pauline, the dancer, after the great

pas,

In which her little feet winked
overhead

Like other fireflies, and amazed the
pit:

Or Baldinacci, when her F in alt
Had touched the silver tops of heaven

itself

With such a pungent soul-dart, even
the Queen

Laid softly, each to each, her white-gloved palms,
 And sighed for joy : or else (I thank your friend)
 Aurora Leigh,—when some indifferent rhymes,
 Like those the boys sang round the holy ox
 On Memphis highway chanced, perhaps, to set
 Our Apis-public lowing. Oh, he wants,
 Instead of any worthy wife at home,
 A star upon his stage of Eglinton !
 Advise him that he is not over-shrewd
 In being so little modest : a dropped star
 Makes bitter waters, says a Book I've read,—
 And there's his unread letter."
 "My dear friend,"
 Lord Howe began . . .

In haste I tore the phrase.
 "You mean your friend of Eglinton, or me ?"

"I mean you, you," he answered with some fire.

"A happy life means prudent compromise ;

The tare runs through the farmer's garnered sheaves ;

But though the gleaner's apron holds pure wheat,

We count her poorer. Tare with wheat, we cry,

And good with drawbacks. You, you love your art,

And, certain of vocation, set your soul

On utterance. Only . . . in this world we have made,

(They say God made it first, but, if He did,

'Twas so long since, . . . and, since, we have spoiled it so,

He scarce would know it, if He looked this way,

From hells we preach of, with the flames blown out.)

In this bad, twisted, topsy-turvy world,

Where all the heaviest wrongs get uppermost,—

In this uneven, unfostering England here,

Where ledger-strokes and sword-strokes count indeed,

But soul-strokes merely tell upon the flesh

They strike from,—it is hard to stand for art,

Unless some golden tripod from the sea

Be fished up, by Apollo's divine chance,

To throne such feet as yours, my prophetess,

At Delphi. Think,—the god comes down as fierce

As twenty bloodhounds ! shakes you, strangles you,

Until the oracular shriek shall ooze in froth !

At best it's not all ease,—at worst too hard :

A place to stand on is a 'vantage gained,

And here's your tripod. To be plain, dear friend,

You're poor, except in what you richly give ;

You labour for your own bread painfully,

Or ere you pour our wine. For art's sake, pause."

I answered slow,—as some wayfaring man,

Who feels himself at night too far from home,

Makes steadfast face against the bitter wind.

"Is art so less a thing than virtue is, That artists first must cater for their ease

Or ever they make issue past themselves

To generous use ? alas, and is it so, That we, who would be somewhat clean, must sweep

Our ways as well as walk them, and no friend

Confirm us nobly,—'Leave results to God,

But you, be clean ?' What ! 'prudent compromise

Makes acceptable life,' you say instead,

You, you, Lord Howe?—in things in-
different, well.
For instance, compromise the wheaten
bread
For rye, the meat for lentils, silk for
serge,
And sleep on down, if needs, for
sleep on straw;
But there, end compromise. I will
not bate
One artist-dream, on straw or down,
my lord,
Nor pinch my liberal soul, though I
be poor,
Nor cease to love high, though I live
thus low."

So speaking, with less anger in my
voice
Than sorrow, I rose quickly to de-
part;
While he, thrown back upon the
noble shame
Of such high-stumbling natures, mur-
mured words,
The right words after wrong ones.
Ah, the man
Is worthy, but so given to entertain
Impossible plans of superhuman life,—
He sets his virtues on so raised a
shelf,
To keep them at the grand millen-
nial height,
He has to mount a stool to get at
them;
And, meantime, lives on quite the
common way,
With everybody's morals.

As we passed,
Lord Howe insisting that his friendly
arm
Should oar me across the sparkling
brawling stream
Which swept from room to room,—
we fell at once
On Lady Waldemar. "Miss Leigh,"
she said,
And gave me such a smile, so cold
and bright,
As if she tried it in a 'tiring glass
And liked it: "all to-night I've
strained at you,
As babes at baubles held up out of
reach
By spiteful nurses ("Never snatch,"
they say,)

And there you sate, most perfectly
shut in
By good Sir Blaise and clever Mister
Smith,
And then our dear Lord Howe! at
last, indeed,
I almost snatched. I have a world
to speak
About your cousin's place in Shrop-
shire, where
I've been to see his work . . . our
work,—you heard
I went? . . . and of a letter, yester-
day,
In which, if I should read a page or
two,
You might feel interest, though you're
locked of course
In literary toil.—You'll like to hear
Your last book lies at the phalan-
stery,
As judged innocuous for the elder
girls
And younger women who still care
for books.
We all must read, you see, before we
live:
But slowly the ineffable light comes
up,
And, as it deepens, drowns the
written word,—
So said your cousin, while we stood
and felt
A sunset from his favourite beech-
tree seat:
He might have been a poet if he
would,
But then he saw the higher thing at
once,
And climbed to it. I think he looks
well now,
Has quite got over that unfor-
tunate . . .
Ah, ah . . . I know it moved you.
Tender-heart!
You took a liking to the wretched girl.
Perhaps you thought the marriage
suitable,
Who knows? a poet hankers for
romance,
And so on. As for Romney Leigh,
'tis sure
He never loved her,—never. By the
way,
You have not heard of *her* . . .?
quite out of sight,

And out of saving? lost in every
sense?"

She might have gone on talking half
an hour,

And I stood still, and cold, and pale,
I think,

As a garden-statue a child pelts with
snow

For pretty pastime. Every now and
then

I put in "Yes" or "No," I scarce
knew why;

The blind man walks wherever the
dog pulls,

And so I answered. Till Lord Howe
broke in;

"What penance takes the wretch who
interrupts

The talk of charming women? I,
at last,

Must brave it. Pardon, Lady Walde-
mar!

The lady on my arm is tired, unwell,
And loyally I've promised she shall
say

No harder word this evening, than...
good-night;

The rest her face speaks for her."—
Then we went.

And I breathe large at home. I drop
my cloak,

Unclasp my girdle, loose the band
that ties

My hair... now could I but un-
loose my soul!

We are sepulchred alive in this close
world,

And want more room.

The charming woman there—
This reckoning up and writing down
her talk

Affects me singularly. How she
talked

To pain me! woman's spite!—you
wear steel-mail;

A woman takes a housewife from her
breast,

And plucks the delicatest needle out
As 'twere a rose, and pricks you
carefully

'Neath nails, 'neath eyelids, in your
nostrils,—say,

A beast would roar so tortured,—but
a man,

A human creature, must not, shall
not flinch,

No, not for shame.

What vexes, after all,
Is just that such as she, with such as I,
Knows how to vex. Sweet heaven,

she takes me up
As if she had fingered me and dog-
eared me

And spelled me by the fireside, half
a life!

She knows my turns, my feeble points.
—What then?

The knowledge of a thing implies the
thing;

Of course, she found *that* in me, she
saw *that*,

Her pencil underscored *this* for a fault,
And I, still ignorant. Shut the book
up;—close!

And crush that beetle in the leaves.
O heart,

At last we shall grow hard too, like
the rest,

And call it self-defence because we are
soft.

And after all, now, why should I be
pained,

That Romney Leigh, my cousin,
should espouse

This Lady Waldemar? And, say,
she held

Her newly-blossomed gladness in my
face, . . .

'Twas natural surely, if not generous;
Considering how, when winter held
her fast,

I helped the frost with mine, and
pained her more

Than she pains me. Pains me!—but
wherefore pained?

'Tis clear my cousin Romney wants
a wife,—

So, good!—The man's need of the
woman, here,

Is greater than the woman's of the
man,

And easier served; for where the man
discerns

A sex (ah, ah, the man can generalise,
Said he), we see but one, ideally

And really: where we yearn to loose
ourselves

And melt like white pearls in another's
wine,

He seeks to double himself by what he
loves,
And make his drink more costly by
our pearls,
At board, at bed, at work, and holiday,
It is not good for man to be alone,—
And that's his way of thinking, first
and last ;
And thus my cousin Romney wants a
wife.

But then my cousin sets his dignity
On personal virtue. If he under-
stands
By love, like others, self-aggrandise-
ment,
It is that he may verily be great
By doing rightly and kindly. Once
he thought,
For charitable ends set duly forth
In Heaven's white judgment-book, to
marry . . . ah,
We'll call her name Aurora Leigh,
although
She's changed since then !—and once,
for social ends,
Poor Marian Erle, my sister Marian
Erle,
My woodland sister, sweet maid
Marian,
Whose memory moans on in me like
the wind
Through ill-shut casements, making
me more sad
Than ever I find reasons for. Alas,
Poor pretty plaintive face, embodied
ghost,
He finds it easy, then, to clap thee off
From pulling at his sleeve and book
and pen,—
He locks thee out at night into the
cold,
Away from butting with thy horny
eyes
Against his crystal dreams,—that,
now, he's strong
To love anew ? that Lady Waldemar
Succeeds my Marian ?

After all, why not ?
He loved not Marian, more than once
he loved
Aurora. If he loves, at last, that
Third,
Albeit she prove as slippery as spilt
oil
On marble floors, I will not augur him

Ill luck for that. Good love, howe'er
ill-placed,
Is better for a man's soul in the end,
Than if he loved ill what deserves
love well.
A pagan, kissing, for a step of Pan,
The wild-goat's hoof-print on the
loamy down,
Exceeds our modern thinker who
turns back
The strata . . . granite, limestone,
coal, and clay,
Concluding coldly with, " Here's law !
Where's God ? "

And then at worse,—if Romney loves
her not,—
At worst,—if he's incapable of love,
Which may be—then indeed, for such
a man
Incapable of love, she's good enough ;
For she, at worst too, is a woman still
And loves him . . . as the sort of
woman can.

My loose long hair began to burn and
creep,
Alive to the very ends, about my
knees :
I swept it backward as the wind
sweeps flame,
With the passion of my hands. Ah,
Romney laughed
One day . . . (how full the memories
come up !)
" —Your Florence fireflies live on in
your hair,"
He said, " it gleams so." Well, I
wring them out,
My fireflies ; made a knot as hard as
life,
Of those loose, soft, impracticable
curls,
And then sat down and thought . . .
" She shall not think
Her thought of me,"—and drew my
desk and wrote.

" Dear Lady Waldemar, I could not
speak
With people round me, nor can sleep
to-night
And not speak, after the great news I
heard
Of you and of my cousin. May you be
Most happy ; and the good he meant
the world,

Replenish his own life. Say what I
say,
And let my word be sweeter for your
mouth,
As you are *you* . . . I only Aurora
Leigh."

That's quiet, guarded! though she
hold it up
Against the light, she'll not see
through it more
Than lies there to be seen. So much
for pride;
And now for peace, a little! Let me
stop
All writing back . . . "Sweet thanks,
my sweetest friend,
"You've made more joyful my great
joy itself."
—No, that's too simple! she would
twist it thus,
"My joy would still be as sweet as
thyme in drawers,
However shut up in the dark and dry;
But violets, aired and dewed by love
like yours,
Out-smell all thyme! we keep that in
our clothes,
But drop the other down our bosoms,
till,
They smell like" . . . ah, I see her
writing back
Just so. She'll make a nosegay of
her words,
And tie it with blue ribbons at the end
To suit a poet;—pshaw!

And then we'll have
The call to church; the broken, sad,
bad dream
Dreamed out at last; the marriage-
vow complete
With the marriage-breakfast; pray-
ing in white gloves,
Drawn off in haste for drinking pagan
toasts
In somewhat stronger wine than any
sipped
By gods, since Bacchus had his way
with grapes.

A postscript stops all that, and rescues
me.

"You need not write. I have been
overworked,
And think of leaving London, Eng-
land even,

And hastening to get nearer to the
sun,

Where men sleep better. So, adieu."
—I fold

And seal,—and now I'm out of all
the coil;

I breathe now; I spring upward like a
branch,

A ten-years school-boy with a crooked
stick

May pull down to his level, in search
of nuts,

But cannot hold a moment. How we
twang

Back on the blue sky, and assert our
height,

While he stares after! Now, the
wonder seems

That I could wrong myself by such a
doubt.

We poets always have uneasy hearts;
Because our hearts, large-rounded as
the globe,

Can turn but one side to the sun at
once.

We are used to dip our artist-hands
in gall

And potash, trying potentialities

Of alternated colour, till at last

We get confused, and wonder for our
skin

How nature tinged it first. Well—
here's the true

Good flesh-colour; I recognise my
hand,—

Which Romney Leigh may clasp as
just a friend's,

And keep his clean.

And now, my Italy.
Alas, if we could ride with naked souls
And make no noise and pay no price
at all,

I would have seen thee sooner, Italy,—
For still I have heard thee crying
through my life,

Thou piercing silence of ecstatic graves,
Men call that name!

But even a witch, to-day,
Must melt down golden pieces in the
nard

Wherewith to anoint her broomstick
ere she rides;

And poets evermore are scant of gold,
And, if they find a piece behind the
door,

It turns by sunset to a withered leaf.
 The Devil himself scarce trusts his
 patented
 Gold-making art to any who make
 rhymes,
 But culls his Faustus from philoso-
 phers
 And not from poets. "Leave my
 Job," said God ;
 And so, the Devil leaves him without
 pence,
 And poverty proves, plainly, special
 grace.
 In these new, just, administrative
 times
 Men clamour for an order of merit.
 Why ?
 Here's black bread on the table, and
 no wine !
 At least I am a poet in being poor ;
 Thank God. I wonder if the manu-
 script
 Of my long poem, if 'twere sold out-
 right,
 Would fetch enough to buy me shoes,
 to go
 A-foot, (thrown in, the necessary
 patch
 For the other side the Alps) ? it can-
 not be :
 I fear that I must sell this residue
 Of my father's books ; although the
 Elzevirs
 Have fly-leaves over-written by his
 hand,
 In faded notes as thick and fine and
 brown
 As cobwebs on a tawny monument
 Of the old Greeks—*conferenda hæc*
 cum his—
Corrupte citat—lege potius,
 And so on, in the scholar's regal way
 Of giving judgment on the parts of
 speech,
 As if he sate on all twelve thrones up-
 piled,
 Arraigning Israel. Ay, but books
 and notes
 Must go together. And this "Proclus"
 too,
 In quaintly dear contracted Grecian
 types,
 Fantastically crumpled, like his
 thoughts
 Which would not seem too plain ; you
 go round twice

For one step forward, then you take
 it back,
 Because you're somewhat giddy !
 there's the rule
 For "Proclus." Ah, I stained this
 middle leaf
 With pressing in't my Florence iris-
 bell,
 Long stalk and all : my father chided
 me
 For that stain of blue blood,—I recol-
 lect
 The peevish turn his voice took,—
 "Silly girls,
 Who plant their flowers in our philo-
 sophy
 To make it fine, and only spoil the
 book !
 No more of it, Aurora." Yes—no
 more !
 Ah, blame of love, that's sweeter than
 all praise
 Of those who love not ! 'tis so lost to
 me,
 I cannot, in such beggared life, afford
 To lose my "Proclus." Not for Flor-
 ence, even.
 The kissing Judas, "Wolff," shall go
 instead,
 Who builds us such a royal book as
 this
 To honour a chief-poet, folio-built,
 And writes above, "The house of
 Nobody :"
 Who floats in cream, as rich as any
 sucked
 From Juno's breasts, the broad
 Homeric lines,
 And, while with their spondaic pro-
 digious mouths
 They lap the lucent margins as babe-
 gods,
 Proclaims them bastards. Wolff's
 an atheist ;
 And if the "Iliad" fell out, as he says,
 By mere fortuitous concourse of old
 songs,
 We'll guess as much, too, for the
 universe.
 That "Wolff," those "Platos" : sweep
 the upper shelves
 As clean as this, and so I am almost
 rich,
 Which means, not forced to think of
 being poor

In sight of ends. To-morrow: no
delay.
I'll wait in Paris till good Carrington
Dispose of such, and, having chaffered
for
My book's price with the publisher,
direct
All proceeds to me. Just a line to ask
His help.

And now I come, my Italy,
My own hills! Are you 'ware of me,
my hills,
How I burn toward you? do you feel
to-night
The urgency and yearning of my soul,
As sleeping mothers feel the sucking
babe
And smile?—Nay, not so much as
when, in heat,
Vain lightnings catch at your invio-
late tops,
And tremble while ye are steadfast.
Still, ye go
Your own determined, calm, indiffer-
ent way
Toward sunrise, shade by shade, and
light by light;
Of all the grand progression nought
left out;
As if God verily made you for your-
selves,
And would not interrupt your life
with ours.

SIXTH BOOK

THE English have a scornful insular
way
Of calling the French light. The
levity
Is in the judgment only, which yet
stands;
For say a foolish thing but oft enough
(And here's the secret of a hundred
creeds,—
Men get opinions as boys learn to
spell,
By reiteration chiefly) the same thing
Shall pass at last for absolutely wise,
And not with fools exclusively. And
so,
We say the French are light, as if we
said
The cat mews, or the milch-cow gives
us milk:
Say rather, cats are milked, and
milch-cows mew.

For what is lightness but inconse-
quence,
Vague fluctuation 'twixt effect and
cause,
Compelled by neither? Is a bullet
light,
That dashes from the gun-mouth,
while the eye
Winks; and the heart beats one, to
flatten itself
To a wafer on the white speck on a
wall
A hundred paces off? Even so direct,
So sternly undivertible of aim,
Is this French people.

All, idealists
Too absolute and earnest, with them
all
The idea of a knife cuts real flesh;
And still, devouring the safe inter-
val,
Which Nature placed between the
thought and act,
With those too fiery and impatient
souls,
They threaten conflagration to the
world
And rush with most unscrupulous
logic on
Impossible practice. Set your orators
To blow upon them with loud windy
mouths
Through watchword phrases, jest or
sentiment,
Which drive our burly brutal English
mobs
Like so much chaff, whichever way
they blow,—
This light French people will not thus
be driven.
They turn indeed; but then they
turn upon
Some central pivot of their thought
and choice,
And veer out by the force of holding
fast.
—That's hard to understand, for
Englishmen
Unused to abstract questions, and
untrained
To trace the involutions, valve by
valve,
In each orb'd bulb-root of a general
truth,
And mark what subtly fine integu-
ment

Divides opposed compartments.

Freedom's self

Comes concrete to us, to be understood,

Fixed in a feudal form incarnately

To suit our ways of thought and reverence,

The special form, with us, being still the thing.

With us, I say, though I'm of Italy
By mother's birth and grave, by
father's grave

And memory; let it be,—a poet's heart

Can swell to a pair of nationalities,
However ill-lodged in a woman's breast.

And so I am strong to love this noble France,

This poet of the nations, who dreams on

And wails on (while the household goes to wreck)

For ever, after some ideal good,—

Some equal poise of sex, some un-
vowed love

Inviolable, some spontaneous brother-
hood,

Some wealth, that leaves none poor
and finds none tired,

Some freedom of the many, that re-
spects

The wisdom of the few. Heroic
dreams!

Sublime, to dream so; natural, to
wake:

And sad, to use such lofty scaffold-
ings,

Erected for the building of a church,
To build instead, a brothel . . . or a

prison—

May God save France!

However she have sighed
Her great soul up into a great man's
face,

To flush his temples out so glorious-
ly

That few dare carp at Cæsar for being
bald,

What then?—this Cæsar represents,
not reigns,

And is no despot, though twice abso-
lute;

This Head has all the people for a
heart;

This purple's lined with the demo-
cracy,—

Now let him see to it! for a rent with-
in

Must leave irreparable rags without.

A serious riddle: find such anywhere
Except in France; and when it's
found in France,

Be sure to read it rightly. So, I
mused

Up and down, up and down, the ter-
raced streets,

The glittering boulevards, the white
colonnades

Of fair fantastic Paris who wears
boughs

Like plumes, as if man made them,—
tossing up

Her fountains in the sunshine from
the squares,

As dice i' the game of beauty, sure
to win;

Or as she blew the down-balls of her
to dreams,

And only waited for their falling back,
To breathe up more, and count her
festive hours.

The city swims in verdure, beautiful
As Venice on the waters, the sea-
swan.

What bosky gardens, dropped in
close-walled courts,

As plums in ladies' laps, who start
and laugh:

What miles of streets that run on after
trees,

Still carrying the necessary shops,
Those open caskets, with the jewels
seen!

And trade is art, and art's philosophy,
In Paris. There's a silk, for instance,
there,

As worth an artist's study for the
folds,

As that bronze opposite! nay, the
bronze has faults;

Art's here too artful,—conscious as a
maid,

Who leans to mark her shadow on
the wall

Until she lose a 'vantage in her step.
Yet Art walks forward, and knows

where to walk:

The artists also, are idealists,
Too absolute for nature, logical

To austerity in the application of
The special theory : not a soul content

To paint a crooked pollard and an ass,
As the English will, because they find it so,

And like it somehow.—Ah, the old
Tuileries

Is pulling its high cap down on its
eyes,

Confounded, conscience-stricken, and
amazed

By the apparition of a new fair face
In those devouring mirrors. Through
the grate,

Within the gardens, what a heap of
babes,

Swept up like leaves beneath the
chestnut-trees,

From every street and alley of the
town,

By the ghosts perhaps, that blow too
bleak this way

A-looking for their heads. Dear
pretty babes ;

I'll wish them luck to have their ball-
play out

Before the next change comes.—And,
farther on,

What statues, poised upon their
columns fine,

As if to stand a moment were a feat,
Against that blue ! What squares !

what breathing-room
For a nation that runs fast,—ay, runs
against

The dentist's teeth at the corner, in
pale rows,

Which grin at progress in an epigram.

I walked the day out, listening to the
chink

Of the first Napoleon's dry bones,
in his second grave

By victories guarded 'neath the golden
dome

That caps all Paris like a bubble.
" Shall

These dry bones live ? " thought Louis
Philippe once,

And lived to know. Herein is argu-
ment

For kings and politicians, but still
more

For poets, who bear buckets to the
well,

Of ampler draught.

These crowds are very good
For meditation (when we are very
strong),

Though love of beauty makes us
timorous,

And draws us backward from the
coarse town-sights

To count the daisies upon dappled
fields,

And hear the streams bleat on among
the hills

In innocent and indolent repose ;
While still with silken elegiac thoughts

We wind out from us the distracting
world,

And die into the chrysalis of a man,
And leave the best that may, to come

of us,
In some brown moth. Be, rather,
bold, and bear

To look into the swarthiest face of
things,

For God's sake Who has made them.

Seven days' work ;
The last day shutting 'twixt its dawn
and eve,

The whole work bettered, of the pre-
vious six !

Since God collected and resumed in
man

The firmaments, the strata, and the
lights,

Fish, fowl, and beast, and insect,—all
their trains

Of various life caught back upon His
arm,

Reorganised, and constituted MAN,
The microcosm, the adding up of
works ;

Within whose fluttering nostrils, then,
at last,

Consummating Himself, the Maker
sighed,

As some strong winner at the foot-
race sighs

Touching the goal.

Humanity is great ;
And, if I would not rather pore upon
An ounce of common, ugly, human
dust,

An artisan's palm, or a peasant's
brow,

Unsmooth, ignoble, save to me and
God,

Than track old Nilus to his silver
 roots,
 And wait on all the changes of the
 moon
 Among the mountain-peaks of Thes-
 saly
 (Until her magic crystal round itself
 For many a witch to see in)—set it
 down
 As weakness,—strength by no means.
 How is this,
 That men of science, osteologists
 And surgeons, beat some poets, in
 respect
 For nature,—count nought common
 or unclean,
 Spend raptures upon perfect speci-
 mens
 Of indurated veins, distorted joints,
 Or beautiful new cases of curved
 spine ;
 While we, we are shocked at nature's
 falling off,
 We dare to shrink back from her warts
 and blains,
 We will not, when she sneezes, look at
 her,
 Not even to say " God bless her " ?
 That's our wrong ;
 For that, she will not trust us often
 with
 Her larger sense of beauty and de-
 sire,
 But tethers us to a lily or a rose
 And bids us diet on the dew inside,—
 Left ignorant that the hungry beggar-
 boy
 (Who stares unseen against our ab-
 sent eyes,
 And wonders at the gods that we
 must be,
 To pass so careless for the oranges !)
 Bears yet a breastful of a fellow-
 world
 To this world, undisparaged, unde-
 spoiled,
 And (while we scorn him for a flower
 or two,
 As being, Heaven help us, less poeti-
 cal)
 Contains, himself, both flowers and
 firmaments
 And surging seas and aspectable stars,
 And all that we would push him out
 of sight
 In order to see nearer. Let us pray

God's grace to keep God's image in
 repute ;
 That so, the poet and philanthropist
 (Even I and Romney), may stand side
 by side,
 Because we both stand face to face
 with men
 Contemplating the people in the
 rough,—
 Yet each so follow a vocation,—his
 And mine.
 I walked on, musing with myself
 On life and art, and whether, after all,
 A larger metaphysics might not help
 Our physics, a completer poetry
 Adjust our daily life and vulgar wants,
 More fully than the special outside
 plans,
 Phalansteries, material institutes,
 The civil conscriptions and lay monas-
 teries
 Preferred by modern thinkers, as they
 thought
 The bread of man indeed made all his
 life,
 And washing seven times in the
 " People's Baths "
 Were sovereign for a people's lep-
 rosy,—
 Still leaving out the essential pro-
 phet's word
 That comes in power. On which, we
 thunder down,
 We prophets, poets,—Virtue's in the
 word !
 The maker burnt the darkness up
 with His,
 To inaugurate the use of vocal life ;
 And, plant a poet's word even, deep
 enough
 In any man's breast, looking presently
 For offshoots, you have done more
 for the man,
 Than if you dressed him in a broad-
 cloth coat
 And warmed his Sunday pottage at
 your fire.
 Yet Romney leaves me . . .
 God ! what face is that ?
 O Romney, O Marian !
 Walking on the quays
 And pulling thoughts to pieces
 leisurely,
 As if I caught at grasses in a field,
 And bit them slow between my ab-
 sent lips,

And shred them with my hands . . .
 What face is that ?
 What a face, what a look, what a likeness ! Full on mine
 The sudden blow of it came down, till all
 My blood swam, my eyes dazzled.
 Then I sprang—
 It was as if a meditative man
 Were dreaming out a summer afternoon
 And watching gnats a-prick upon a pond,
 When something floats up suddenly, out there,
 Turns over . . . a dead face, known once alive—
 So old, so new ! It would be dreadful now
 To lose the sight and keep the doubt of this.
 He plunges—ha ! he has lost it in the splash.
 I plunged—I tore the crowd up, either side,
 And rushed on,—forward, forward . . . after her.
 Her ? whom ?
 A woman sauntered slow, in front, munching an apple,—she left off amazed
 As if I had snatched it : that's not she, at least.
 A man walked arm-linked with a lady veiled,
 Both heads dropped closer than the need of talk :
 They started ; he forgot her with his face,
 And she, herself,—and clung to him as if
 My look were fatal. Such a stream of folk,
 And all with cares and business of their own !
 I ran the whole quay down against their eyes ;
 No Marian ; nowhere Marian. Almost, now,
 I could call "Marian, Marian," with the shriek
 Of desperate creatures calling for the Dead.
 Where is she, was she ? was she anywhere ?

B.P.

I stood still, breathless, gazing, straining out
 In every uncertain distance, till, at last,
 A gentleman abstracted as myself
 Came full against me, then resolved the clash
 In voluble excuses,—obviously
 Some learned member of the Institute
 Upon his way there, walking, for his health,
 While meditating on the last "Discourse" ;
 Pinching the empty air 'twixt finger and thumb,
 From which the snuff being ousted by that shock,
 Defiled his snow-white waistcoat, duly pricked
 At the button-hole with honourable red ;
 "Madame, your pardon,"—there, he swerved from me
 A metre, as confounded as he had heard
 That Dumas would be chosen to fill up
 The next chair vacant, by his "men *in us*."
 Since when was genius found respectable ?
 It passes in its place, indeed,—which means
 The seventh floor back, or else the hospital :
 Revolving pistols are ingenious things,
 But prudent men (Academics are)
 Scarce keep them in the cupboard, next the prunes.
 And so, abandoned to a bitter mirth,
 I loitered to my inn. O world, O world,
 O jurists, rhymers, dreamers, what you please,
 We play a weary game of hide-and-seek !
 We shape a figure of our fantasy,
 Call nothing something, and run after it
 And lose it, lose ourselves too in the search ;
 Till, clash against us, comes a somebody
 Who also has lost something and is lost,

G G

Philosopher against philanthropist,
 Academician against poet, man
 Against woman, against the living
 the dead,—
 Then home, with a bad headache and
 worse jest!

To change the water for my helio-
 tropes
 And yellow roses. Paris has such
 flowers.
 But England, also. 'Twas a yellow
 rose,
 By that south window of the little
 house,
 My cousin Romney gathered with his
 hand
 On all my birthdays for me, save the
 last;
 And then I shook the tree too rough,
 too rough,
 For roses to stay after.

Now, my maps.
 I must not linger here from Italy
 Till the last nightingale is tired of
 song,
 And the last firefly dies off in the
 maize.
 My soul's in haste to leap into the sun
 And scorch and seethe itself to a finer
 mood,
 Which here, in this chill north, is apt
 to stand
 Too stiffly in former moulds.

That face persists.
 It floats up, it turns over in my mind,
 As like to Marian, as one dead is like
 The same alive. In very deed a face
 And not a fancy, though it vanished
 so;
 The small fair face between the darks
 of hair,
 I used to liken, when I saw her first,
 To a point of moonlit water down
 a well:

The low brow, the frank space be-
 tween the eyes,
 Which always had the brown pathetic
 look
 Of a dumb creature who had been
 beaten once,
 And never since was easy with the
 world.

Ah, ah—now I remember perfectly
 Those eyes, to-day,—how overlarge
 they seemed,

As if some patient passionate despair
 (Like a coal dropt and forgot on
 tapestry,
 Which slowly burns a widening circle
 out)

Had burnt them larger, larger. And
 those eyes

To-day, I do remember, saw me too,
 As I saw them, with conscious lids
 astrain

In recognition. Now, a fantasy,
 A simple shade or image of the brain,
 Is merely passive, does not retroact,
 Is seen, but sees not.

'Twas a real face,
 Perhaps a real Marian.

Which being so,
 I ought to write to Romney, "Mari-
 an's here.
 Be comforted for Marian."

My pen fell,
 My hands struck sharp together, as
 hands do

Which hold at nothing. Can I write
 to *him*

A half truth? can I keep my own soul
 blind

To the other half, . . . the worse?
 What are our souls,

If still, to run on straight a sober pace
 Nor start at every pebble or dead leaf,
 They must wear blinkers, ignore facts,
 suppress

Six-tenths of the road? Confront
 the truth, my soul!

And oh, as truly as that was Marian's
 face,

The arms of that same Marian clasped
 a thing

. . . Not hid so well beneath the
 scanty shawl,

I cannot name it now for what it was.

A child. Small business has a cast-
 away

Like Marian, with that crown of pros-
 perous wives,

At which the gentlest she grows arro-
 gant

And says "my child." Who'll find
 an emerald ring

On a beggar's middle finger, and re-
 quire

More testimony to convict a thief?
 A child's too costly for so mere a

wretch;

She filched it somewhere; and it means, with her,
Instead of honour, blessing, . . . merely shame.

I cannot write to Romney, "Here she is,
Here's Marian found! I'll set you on her track:

I saw her here, in Paris, . . . and her child.

She put away your love two years ago,

But, plainly, not to starve. You suffered then;

And, now that you've forgot her utterly

As any last year's annual, in whose place

You've planted a thick flowering evergreen,

I choose, being kind, to write and tell you this

To make you wholly easy—she's not dead,

But only . . . damned."

Stop there: I go too fast;
I'm cruel like the rest,—in haste to take

The first stir in the arras for a rat,
And set my barking, biting thoughts upon't.

—A child! what then? Suppose a neighbour's sick

And asked her, "Marian, carry out my child

In this spring air,"—I punish her for that?

Or say, the child should hold her round the neck

For good child-reasons, that he liked it so

And would not leave her—she had winning ways—

I brand her therefore, that she took the child?

Not so.

I will not write to Romney Leigh.
For now he's happy,—and she may indeed

Be guilty,—and the knowledge of her fault

Would draggle his smooth time. But I, whose days

Are not so fine they cannot bear the rain,

And who, moreover, having seen her face,

Must see it again, . . . *will* see it, by my hopes

Of one day seeing heaven too. The police

Shall track her, hound her, ferret their own soil;

We'll dig this Paris to its catacombs
But certainly we'll find her, have her out,

And save her, if she will or will not—child

Or no child,—if a child, then one to save!

The long weeks passed on without consequence.

As easy find a footprint on the sand
The morning after spring-tide, as the trace

Of Marian's feet between the incessant surfs

Of this live flood. She may have moved this way,—

But so the starfish does, and crosses out

The dent of her small shoe. The foiled police

Renounced me; "Could they find a girl and child,

No other signalment but girl and child?

No data shown, but noticeable eyes
And hair in masses, low upon the brow,

As if it were a "iron crown and pressed?"

Friends heighten, and suppose they specify:

Why, girls with hair and eyes, are everywhere

In Paris; they had turned me up in vain

No Marian Erle indeed, but certainly Mathildes, Justines, Victoires, . . .

or, if I sought
The English, Betsis, Saras, by the score.

They might as well go out into the fields

To find a speckled bean, that's somehow specked,

And somewhere in the pod."—They left me so.

Philosopher against philanthropist dreamed
Academician against poet, man
Against woman, against the
the dead,—
Then home, with a bad head aches her ! I
worse jest !

To change the water for my tropes
And yellow roses. Paris has flowers.
But England, also. 'Twas a present ;
rose, had just
By that south window of the
house, place of
My cousin Romney gathered w
hand ers to be
On all my birthdays for me, sa
last ; ow . . .
And then I shook the tree too : chance
too rough, st night,
For roses to stay after.

Now, my harder
I must not linger here from it ;
Till the last nightingale is then the
song,
And the last firefly dies off : starry
maize.
My soul's in haste to leap into the place
And scorch and seethe itself to
mood, (is), and
Which here, in this chill north
to stand es in the
Too stiffly in former moulds.

That face with the
It floats up, it turns over in my
As like to Marian, as one dead the thing
The same alive. In very deed
And not a fancy, though it vig, while
so ;

The small fair face between the braided
of hair,
I used to liken, when I saw her, blossoms
To a point of moonlit water d. this
a well :

The low brow, the frank space between
the eyes,
Which always had the brown pathetic
look

Of a dumb creature who had been
beaten once,
And never since was easy with the
world.

Ah, ah—now I remember perfectly
Those eyes, to-day,—how overlarge
they seemed,

That branch of flowering mountain-
gorse ? ”—“ So much ?
Too much for me, then ! ” turning
the face round
So close upon me, that I felt the sigh
It turned with.

“ Marian, Marian ! ”—face
to face—
“ Marian ! I find you. Shall I let
you go ? ”

I held her two slight wrists with both
my hands ;
“ Ah Marian, Marian, can I let you
go ? ”

—She fluttered from me like a cycla-
men,
As white, which, taken in a sudden
wind,
Beats on against the palisade.—“ Let
pass,”

She said at last. “ I will not,” I
replied ;

“ I lost my sister Marian many days,
And sought her ever in my walks and
prayers,

And, now I find her . . . do we
throw away

The bread we worked and prayed
for,—crumble it

And drop it . . . to do even so by
thee

Whom still I've hungered after more
than bread,

My sister Marian ?—can I hurt thee,
dear ?

Then why distrust me ? Never
tremble so.

Come with me rather, where we'll talk
and live,

And none shall vex us. I've a home
for you

And me and no one else ” . . .
She shook her head.

“ A home for you and me and no one
else

Ill-suits one of us : I prefer to such,
A roof of grass on which a flower
might spring,

—Less costly to me than the cheapest
A here ;

And yet I could not, at this hour,
Or afford

like home, even. That you offer
Me yours,

A thank you. You are good as heaven
itself—

As good as one I knew before . . .
Farewell."

I loosed her hands.—"In *his* name,
no farewell!"

(She stood as if I held her.) "For
his sake,

For his sake, Romney's! by the good
he meant,

Ay, always! by the love he pressed
for once,—

And by the grief, reproach, abandon-
ment,

He took in change" . . .

"He, Romney! who grieved
him?

Who had the heart for't? what re-
proach touch'd *him*?

Be merciful,—speak quickly."

"Therefore come,"

I answered with authority,—"*I* think
We dare to speak such things, and

name such names,

In the open squares of Paris!"

Not a word

She said, but, in a gentle humbled
way

(As one who had forgot herself in
grief),

Turned round and followed closely
where I went,

As if I led her by a narrow plank

Across devouring waters, step by
step,—

And so in silence we walked on a mile.

And then she stopped: her face was
white as wax.

"We go much farther?"

"You are ill," I asked,

"Or tired?"

She looked the whiter for
her smile.

"There's one at home," she said,

"has need of me

By this time,—and I must not let him
wait."

"Not even," I asked, "to hear of
Romney Leigh?"

"Not even," she said, "to hear of
Mister Leigh."

"In that case," I resumed, "I go
with you,

And we can talk the same thing there
as here.

None waits for me: I have my day to
spend."

Her lips moved in a spasm without a
sound,—

But then she spoke. "It shall be as
you please;

And better so—'tis shorter seen than
told.

And though you will not find me
worth your pains,

That even, may be worth some pains
to know,

For one as good as you are."

Then she led

The way, and I, as by a narrow plank
Across devouring waters, followed

her,

Stepping by her footsteps, breathing
by her breath,

And holding her with eyes that would
not slip;

And so, without a word, we walked a
mile,

And so, another mile, without a
word.

Until the peopled streets being all dis-
missed,

House-rows and groups all scattered
like a flock,

The market-gardens thickened, and
the long

White walls beyond, like spiders' out-
side threads,

Stretched, feeling blindly toward the
country-fields

Through half-built habitations and
half-dug

Foundations,—intervals of trenchant
chalk,

That bite betwixt the grassy uneven
turfs

Where goats (vine-tendrils trailing
from their mouths)

Stood perched on edges of the cellar-
age

Which should be, staring as about to
leap

To find their coming Bacchus. All
the place

Seemed less a cultivation than a
waste:

Men work here, only,—scarce begin
to live:

All's sad, the country struggling with
the town,

Like an untamed hawk upon a strong
man's fist,

That beats its wings and tries to get
away,
And cannot choose be satisfied so soon
To hop through court-yards with its
right foot tied,
The vintage plains and pastoral hills
in sight!

We stopped beside a house too high
and slim
To stand there by itself, but waiting
till
Five others, two on this side, three on
that,
Should grow up from the sullen second
floor
They pause at now, to build it to a
row.
The upper windows partly were un-
glazed
Meantime,—a meagre, unripe house :
a line
Of rigid poplars elbowed it behind,
And, just in front, beyond the lime
and bricks
That wronged the grass between it
and the road,
A great acacia, with its slender trunk
And overpoise of multitudinous leaves
(In which a hundred fields might spill
their dew
And intense verdure, yet find room
enough),
Stood, reconciling all the place with
green.

I followed up the stair upon her step.
She hurried upward, shot across a
face,
A woman's on the landing,—“How
now, now!
Is no one to have holidays but you?
You said an hour, and stay three
hours, I think,
And Julie waiting for your betters
here?
Why if he had waked, he might have
waked, for me.”
—Just murmuring an excusing word
she passed
And shut the rest out with the cham-
ber-door,
Myself shut in beside her.

’Twas a room
Scarce larger than a grave, and near
as bare;

Two stools, a pallet-bed; I saw the
room:

A mouse could find no sort of shelter
in’t,

Much less a greater secret; curtain-
less,—

The window fixed you with its tortur-
ing eye,

Defying you to take a step apart,
If peradventure you would hide a
thing.

I saw the whole room, I and Marian
there

Alone.

Alone? She threw her bonnet off,
Then sighing as ’twere sighing the
last time,

Approached the bed, and drew a
shawl away:

You could not peel a fruit you fear to
bruise

More calmly and more carefully than
so,—

Nor would you find within, a rosier
flushed

Pomegranate.

There he lay, upon his back,
The yearling creature, warm and
moist with life

To the bottom of his dimples,—to the
ends

Of the lovely tumbled curls about his
face;

For since he had been covered over-
much

To keep him from the light-glare,
both his cheeks

Were hot and scarlet as the first live
rose

The shepherd's heart-blood ebbed
away into,

The faster for his love. And love was
here

As instant! in the pretty baby-
mouth,

Shut close as if for dreaming that it
sucked;

The little naked feet drawn up the
way

Of nestled birdlings; everything so
soft

And tender,—to the little holdfast
hands,

Which, closing on a finger into sleep,
Had kept the mould of’t.

While we stood there dumb,—

For oh, that it should take such innocence
 To prove just guilt, I thought, and
 stood there dumb ;
 The light upon his eyelids pricked
 them wide,
 And, staring out at us with all their
 blue,
 As half perplexed between the angel-
 hood
 He had been away to visit in his sleep,
 And our most mortal presence,—grad-
 ually
 He saw his mother's face, accepting it
 In change for heaven itself, with such
 a smile
 As might have well been learnt there,
 —never moved,
 But smiled on, in a drowse of ecstasy,
 So happy (half with her and half with
 heaven)
 He could not have the trouble to be
 stirred,
 But smiled and lay there. Like a
 rose, I said :
 As red and still indeed as any rose,
 That blows in all the silence of its
 leaves,
 Content, in blowing, to fulfil its life.

She leaned above him (drinking him
 as wine)
 In that extremity of love, 'twill pass
 For agony or rapture, seeing that
 love
 Includes the whole of nature, round-
 ing it
 To love . . . no more,—since more
 can never be
 Than just love. Self-forgot, cast out
 of self,
 And drowning in the transport of the
 sight,
 Her whole pale passionate face,
 mouth, forehead, eyes,
 One gaze, she stood ! then, slowly as
 he smiled,
 She smiled too, slowly, smiling un-
 ware,
 And drawing from his countenance
 to hers
 A fainter red, as if she watched a
 flame
 And stood in it a-glow. " How beau-
 tiful,"
 Said she.

I answered, trying to be cold.
 (Must sin have compensations, was
 my thought,
 As if it were a holy thing like grief ?
 And is a woman to be fooled aside
 From putting vice down, with that
 woman's toy,
 A baby ?)—" Ay ! the child is well
 enough,"
 I answered. " If his mother's palms
 are clean,
 They need be glad, of course, in clasp-
 ing such :
 But if not,—I would rather lay my
 hand,
 Were I she,—on God's brazen altar-
 bars
 Red-hot with burning sacrificial
 lambs,
 Than touch the sacred curls of such a
 child."

She plunged her fingers in his cluster-
 ing locks,
 As one who would not be afraid of
 fire ;
 And then, with indrawn steady utter-
 ance, said,—
 " My lamb, my lamb ! although,
 through such as thou,
 The most unclean got courage and
 approach
 To God, once,—now they cannot,
 even with men,
 Find grace enough for pity and gentle
 words."

" My Marian," I made answer, grave
 and sad,
 " The priest who stole a lamb to offer
 him,
 Was still a thief. And if a woman
 steals
 (Through God's own barrier-hedges
 of true love,
 Which fence out licence in securing
 love)
 A child like this, that smiles so in her
 face,
 She is no mother, but a kidnapper,
 And he's a dismal orphan . . . not a
 son ;
 Whom all her kisses cannot feed so
 full
 He will not miss hereafter a pure
 home

To live in, a pure heart to lean against,
A pure good mother's name and
memory
To hope by, when the world grows
thick and bad,
And he feels out for virtue."

"Oh," she smiled
With bitter patience, "the child
takes his chance,—
Not much worse off in being father-
less

Than I was, fathered. He will say,
belike,
His mother was the saddest creature
born ;

He'll say his mother lived so contrary
To joy, that even the kindest, seeing
her,
Grew sometimes almost cruel : he'll
not say

She flew contrarious in the face of God
With bat-wings of her vices. Stole
my child,—

My flower of earth, my only flower on
earth,

My sweet, my beauty ! " . . . Up
she snatched the child,
And, breaking on him in a storm of
tears,

Drew out her long sobs from their
shivering roots,

Until he took it for a game, and
stretched

His feet, and flapped his eager arms
like wings,

And crowed and gurgled through his
infant laugh :

" Mine, mine," she said ; " I have as
sure a right

As any glad proud mother in the
world,

Who sets her darling down to cut his
teeth

Upon her church-ring. If she talks
of law,

I talk of law ! I claim my mother-
dues

By law,—the law which now is para-
mount ;

The common law, by which the poor
and weak

Are trodden underfoot by vicious
men,

And loathed for ever after by the good.
Let pass ! I did not filch . . . I
found the child."

" You found him, Marian ? "

" Ay, I found him where
I found my curse,—in the gutter,
with my shame !

What have you, any of you, to say to
that,

Who all are happy, and sit safe and
high,

And never spoke before to arraign my
right

To grief itself ? What, what . . .
being beaten down

By hoofs of maddened oxen into a
ditch,

Half-dead, whole mangled . . . when
a girl, at last,

Breathes, sees . . . and finds there,
bedded in her flesh,

Because of the overcoming shock
perhaps,

Some coin of price ! . . . and when a
good man comes

(That's God ! the best men are not
quite as good)

And says, ' I dropped the coin there ;
take it, you,

And keep it,—it shall pay you for
the loss,—

You all put up your finger—' See the
thief !

Observe that precious thing she has
come to filch !

How bad those girls are ! ' Oh, my
flower, my pet,

I dare forget I have you in my arms,
And fly off to be angry with the world,

And fright you, hurt you with my
tempers, till

You double up your lip ? Ah, that
indeed

Is bad : a naughty mother ! "

" You mistake,"
I interrupted ; " if I loved you not,
I should not, Marian, certainly be
here."

" Alas," she said, " you are so very
good ;

And yet I wish, indeed, you had never
come

To make me sob until I vex the child.
It is not wholesome for these pleasure-
plats

To be so early watered by our brine.
And then, who knows ? he may not
like me now

As well, perhaps, as ere he saw me
fret,—

One's ugly fretting ! he has eyes the
same

As angels, but he cannot see as
deep,

And so I've kept for ever in his sight
A sort of smile to please him,—as you
place

A green thing from the garden in a
cup,

To make believe it grows there. Look,
my sweet,

My cowslip-ball ! we've done with
that cross face,

And here's the face come back you
used to like.

Ah, ah ! he laughs ! he likes me. Ah,
Miss Leigh,

You're great and pure ; but were you
purer still,—

As if you had walked, we'll say, no
otherwhere

Than up and down the new Jerusa-
lem,

And held your trailing lutestring up
yourself

From brushing the twelve stones, for
fear of some

Small speck as little as a needle-
prick,

White stitched on white,—the child
would keep to me,

Would choose his poor lost Marian,
like me best,

And, though you stretched your arms,
cry back and cling,

As we do, when God says it's time to
die

And bids us go up higher. Leave us,
then ;

We two are happy. Does he push me
off ?

He's satisfied with me, as I with him."

" So soft to one, so hard to others !
Nay,"

I cried, more angry that she melted
me,

" We make henceforth a cushion of
our faults

To sit and practise easy virtues on ?
I thought a child was given to sanctify

A woman,—set her in the sight of all
The clear-eyed Heavens, a chosen

minister

To do their business and lead spirits
up

The difficult blue heights. A woman
lives,

Not bettered, quickened toward the
truth and good

Through being a mother ? . . . then
she's none ! although

She damps her baby's cheeks by kiss-
ing them,

As we kill roses."

" Kill ! O Christ," she said,
And turned her wild sad face from

side to side

With most despairing wonder in it—

" What,

What have you in your souls against
me then,

All of you ? am I wicked, do you
think ?

God knows me, trusts me with the
child ! but you,

You think me really wicked ? "

" Complaisant,"
I answered softly, " to a wrong

you've done,

Because of certain profits,—which is
wrong

Beyond the first wrong, Marian.
When you left

The pure place and the noble heart, to
take

The hand of a seducer " . . .

" Whom ? whose hand ?

I took the hand of " . . .

Springing up erect,
And lifting up the child at full arm's

length,

As if to bear him like an oriflamme
Unconquerable to armies of re-

proach,—

" By him," she said, " my child's
head and its curls,

By those blue eyes no woman born
could dare

A perjury on, I make my mother's
oath,

That if I left that Heart, to lighten it,
The blood of mine was still, except for

grief !

No cleaner maid than I was, took a
step

To a sadder end,—no matron-
mother now

Looks backward to her early maiden-
hood

Through chaster pulses. I speak
steadily:

And if I lie so . . . if, being fouled in
will

And paltered with in soul by devil's
lust,

I dared to bid this angel take my
part, . . .

Would God sit quiet, let us think, in
heaven,

Nor strike me dumb with thunder?
Yet I speak:

He clears me therefore. What, 'se-
duced' 's your word?

Do wolves seduce a wandering fawn
in France?

Do eagles, who have pinched a lamb
with claws,

Seduce it into carrion? So with
me.

I was not ever, as you say, seduced,
But simply, murdered."

There she paused, and sighed,
With such a sigh as drops from agony
To exhaustion,—sighing while she
let the babe

Slide down upon her bosom from her
arms,

And all her face's light fell after him,
Like a torch quenched in falling.

Down she sank,
And sate upon the bedside with the
child.

But I, convicted, broken utterly,
With woman's passion clung about
her waist,

And kissed her hair and eyes,—“I
have been wrong,

Sweet Marian” . . . (weeping in a
tender rage)

“Sweet holy Marian! And now,
Marian, now,

I'll use your oath although my lips
are hard,

And by the child, my Marian, by the
child,

I'll swear his mother shall be innocent
Before my conscience, as in the open
Book

Of Him who reads for judgment.
Innocent,

My sister! let the night be ne'er so
dark,

The moon is surely somewhere in the
sky;

So surely is your whiteness to be
found

Through all dark facts. But pardon,
pardon me,

And smile a little, Marian,—for the
child,

If not for me, my sister."

The poor lip
Just motioned for the smile and let it
go:

And then, with scarce a stirring of the
mouth,

As if a statue spoke that could not
breathe,

But spoke on calm between its marble
lips,—

“I'm glad, I'm very glad you clear
me so.

I should be sorry that you set me
down

With harlots, or with even a better
name

Which misbecomes his mother. For
the rest,

I am not on a level with your love,
Nor ever was, you know,—but now

am worse,
Because that world of yours has
dealt with me

As when the hard sea bites and chews
a stone

And changes the first form of it. I've
marked

A shore of pebbles bitten to one shape
From all the various life of mad-
repores;

And so, that little stone, called
Marian Erle,

Picked up and dropped by you and
another friend,

Was ground and tortured by the in-
cessant sea

And bruised from what she was,—
changed! death's a change,

And she, I said, was murdered;
Marian's dead.

What can you do with people when
they are dead,

But, if you are pious, sing a hymn
and go,

Or, if you are tender, heave a sigh
and go,

But go by all means,—and permit
the grass

To keep its green feud up 'twixt them
and you?

Then leave me,—let me rest. I'm
 dead, I say.
 And if, to save the child from death as
 well,
 The mother in me has survived the
 rest,
 Why, that's God's miracle you must
 not tax,—
 I'm not less dead for that: I'm
 nothing more
 But just a mother. Only for the
 child,
 I'm warm, and cold, and hungry,
 and afraid,
 And smell the flowers a little, and see
 the sun,
 And speak still, and am silent,—just
 for him!
 I pray you therefore to mistake me
 not,
 And treat me, haply, as I were
 alive;
 For though you ran a pin into my
 soul,
 I think it would not hurt nor trouble
 me.
 Here's proof, dear lady,—in the
 market-place
 But now, you promised me to say a
 word
 About . . . a friend, who once, long
 years ago,
 Took God's place toward me, when
 He draws and loves
 And does not thunder, . . . whom
 at last I left,
 As all of us leave God. You thought
 perhaps,
 I seemed to care for hearing of that
 friend?
 Now, judge me! we have sate here
 half an hour
 And talked together of the child and
 me,
 And I not asked as much as, 'What's
 the thing
 You had to tell me of the friend . . .
 the friend?'
 He's sad, I think you said,—he's sick,
 perhaps?
 It's nought to Marian if he's sad or
 sick.
 Another would have crawled beside
 your foot
 And prayed your words out. Why, a
 beast, a dog,

A starved cat, if he had fed it once
 with milk,
 Would show less hardness. But I'm
 dead, you see,
 And that explains it."
 Poor, poor thing, she spoke
 And shook her head, as white and
 calm as frost
 On days too cold for raining any
 more,
 But still with such a face, so much
 alive,
 I could not choose but take it on my
 arm
 And stroke the placid patience of its
 cheeks,—
 Then told my story out, of Romney
 Leigh,
 How, having lost her, sought her,
 missed her still,
 He, broken-hearted for himself and
 her,
 Had drawn the curtains of the world
 awhile
 As if he had done with morning.
 There I stopped,
 For when she gasped, and pressed me
 with her eyes,
 "And now . . . how is it with him?
 tell me now,"—
 I felt the shame of compensated grief,
 And chose my words with scruple—
 slowly stepped
 Upon the slippery stones set here and
 there
 Across the sliding water. "Cer-
 tainly,
 As evening empties morning into
 night,
 Another morning takes the evening up
 With healthful, providential inter-
 change;
 And, though he thought still—of her,"
 "Yes, she knew,
 She understood: she had supposed,
 indeed,
 That, as one stops a hole upon a flute,
 At which a new note comes and
 shapes the tune,
 Excluding her would bring a worthier
 in,
 And, long ere this, that Lady Walde-
 mar
 He loved so" . . .
 "Loved," I started,—“loved
 her so!

Now tell me " . . .

" I will tell you," she replied :
 " But since we're taking oaths, you'll
 promise first

That he, in England, he, shall never
 learn

In what a dreadful trap his creature
 here,

Round whose unworthy neck he had
 meant to tie

The honourable ribbon of his name,
 Fell unaware, and came to butchery :
 Because—I know him,—as he takes
 to heart

The grief of every stranger, he's not
 like

To banish mine as far as I should
 choose

In wishing him most happy. Now he
 leaves

To think of me, perverse, who went
 my way,

Unkind, and left him,—but if once he
 knew . . .

Ah, then, the sharp nail of my cruel
 wrong

Would fasten me for ever in his sight,
 Like some poor curious bird, through
 each spread wing

Nailed high up over a fierce hunter's
 fire,

To spoil the dinner of all tenderer folk
 Come in by chance. Nay, since your
 Marian's dead,

You shall not hang her up, but dig a
 hole

And bury her in silence ! ring no
 bells."

I answered gaily, though my whole
 voice wept ;

" We'll ring the joy-bells, not the
 funeral-bells,

Because we have her back, dead or
 alive."

She never answered that, but shook
 her head ;

Then low and calm, as one who, safe
 in heaven,

Shall tell a story of his lower life,
 Unmoved by shame or anger,—so she
 spoke.

She told me she had loved upon her
 knees,

As others pray, more perfectly ab-
 sorbed

In the act and aspiration. She felt
 his,

For just his uses, not her own at
 all,

His stool, to sit on, or put up his foot,
 His cup, to fill with wine or vinegar,
 Whichever drink might please him at
 the chance,

For that should please her always :
 let him write

His name upon her . . . it seemed
 natural ;

It was most precious, standing on his
 shelf,

To wait until he chose to lift his hand.
 Well, well,—I saw her then, and must
 have seen

How bright her life went, floating on
 her love,

Like wicks the housewives send afloat
 on oil,

Which feeds them to a flame that
 lasts the night.

To do good seemed so much his
 business,

That, having done it, she was fain to
 think,

Must fill up his capacity for joy.

At first she never mooted with
 herself

If he was happy, since he made her so,
 Or if he loved her, being so much
 beloved :

Who thinks of asking if the sun is
 light,

Observing that it lightens ? who's so
 bold,

To question God of His felicity ?

Still less. And thus she took for
 granted first,

What first of all she should have put
 to proof,

And sinned against him so, but only
 so.

" What could you hope," she said,
 " of such as she ?

You take a kid you like, and turn it
 out

In some fair garden ; though the
 creature's fond

And gentle, it will leap upon the beds
 And break your tulips, bite your
 tender trees :

The wonder would be if such inno-
 cence

Spoiled less. A garden is no place
for kids."

And, by degrees, when he who had
chosen her,

Brought in his courteous and benig-
nant friends

To spend their goodness on her, which
she took

So very gladly, as a part of his,—
By slow degrees, it broke on her slow
sense,

That she, too, in that Eden of de-
light

Was out of place, and, like the silly
kid,

Still did most mischief where she
meant most love.

A thought enough to make a woman
mad

(No beast in this, but she may well go
mad)

That, saying "I am thine to love and
use,"

May blow the plague in her protesting
breath

To the very man for whom she claims
to die,—

That, clinging round his neck, she
pulls him down

And drowns him,—and that, lavish-
ing her soul,

She hales perdition on him. "So,
being mad,"

Said Marian . . .

"Ah—who stirred such
thoughts, you ask?

Whose fault it was, that she should
have such thoughts?

None's fault, none's fault. The light
comes, and we see:

But if it were not truly for our eyes,
There would be nothing seen, for all
the light;

And so with Marian. If she saw at
last,

The sense was in her,—Lady Walde-
mar

Had spoken all in vain else."

"O my heart,
O prophet in my heart," I cried aloud,

"Then Lady Waldemar spoke!"

"Did she speak,"
Mused Marian softly—"or did she
only sign?

Or did she put a word into her face

And look, and so impress you with the
word?

Or leave it in the foldings of her gown,
Like rosemary smells, a movement
will shake out

When no one's conscious? who shall
say, or guess?

One thing alone was certain,—from the
day

The gracious lady paid a visit first,
She, Marian, saw things different,—
felt distrust

Of all that sheltering roof of circum-
stance

Her hopes were building into with
clay nests:

Her heart was restless, pacing up and
down

And fluttering, like dumb creatures
before storms,

Not knowing wherefore she was ill at
ease."

"And still the lady came," said
Marian Erle,

"Much oftener than *he* knew it,
Mister Leigh.

She bade me never tell him that she
had come,

She liked to love me better than he
knew,

So very kind was Lady Waldemar:
And every time she brought with her
more light,

And every light made sorrow clearer
. . . . Well,

Ah, well! we cannot give her blame
for that;

'Twould be the same thing if an angel
came,

Whose right should prove our wrong.
And every time

The lady came, she looked more
beautiful,

And spoke more like a flute among
green trees,

Until at last, as one, whose heart
being sad

On hearing lovely music, suddenly
Dissolves in weeping, I brake out in
tears

Before her . . . asked her counsel
. . . had I erred

In being too happy? would she set
me straight?

For she, being wise and good and
 born above
 The flats I had never climbed from,
 could perceive
 If such as I, might grow upon the
 hills;
 And whether such poor herb
 sufficed to grow,
 For Romney Leigh to break his fast
 upon't,—
 Or would he pine on such, or haply
 starve?
 She wrapt me in her generous arms at
 once,
 And let me dream a moment how it
 feels
 To have a real mother, like some
 girls:
 But when I looked, her face was
 younger . . . ay,
 Youth's too bright not to be a little
 hard,
 And beauty keeps itself still upper-
 most,
 That's true!—Though Lady Walde-
 mar was kind,
 She hurt me, hurt, as if the morning
 sun
 Should smite us on the eyelids when
 we sleep,
 And wake us up with headache. Ay,
 and soon
 Was light enough to make my heart
 ache too:
 She told me truths I asked for . . .
 'twas my fault . . .
 'That Romney could not love me, if
 he would,
 As men call loving; there are bloods
 that flow
 Together, like some rivers, and not
 mix,
 Through contraries of nature. He
 indeed
 Was set to wed me, to espouse my
 class,
 Act out a rash opinion,—and, once
 wed
 So just a man and gentle, could not
 choose
 But make my life as smooth as
 marriage-ring,
 Bespeak me mildly, keep me a
 cheerful house,
 With servants, brooches, all the
 flowers I liked,

And pretty dresses, silk the whole
 year round' . . .
 At which I stopped her,—'This for
 me. And now
 'For *him*.'—She murmured,—truth
 grew difficult;
 She owned, 'Twas plain a man like
 Romney Leigh
 Required a wife more level to him-
 self.
 If day by day he had to bend his
 height
 To pick up sympathies, opinions,
 thoughts,
 And interchange the common talk
 of life
 Which helps a man to live as well as
 talk,
 His days were heavily taxed.
 Who buys a staff
 To fit the hand, that reaches but the
 knee?
 He'd feel it better to be forced to
 miss
 The perfect joy of married suited
 pairs,
 Who, bursting through the separa-
 ting hedge
 Of personal dues with that sweet
 eglantine
 Of equal love, keep saying, "So *we*
 think,
 "It strikes *us*,—that's *our* fancy."
 —When I asked
 If earnest will, devoted love, em-
 ployed
 In youth like mine, would fail to raise
 me up,—
 As two strong arms will always raise a
 child
 To a fruit hung overhead? she sighed
 and sighed . . .
 'That could not be,' she feared.
 'You take a pink,
 You dig about its roots and water
 it,
 And so improve it to a garden-pink,
 But will not change it to a heliotrope,
 The kind remains. And then, the
 harder truth—
 This Romney Leigh, so rash to leap
 a pale,
 So bold for conscience, quick for
 martyrdom,
 Would suffer steadily and never
 flinch,

But suffer surely and keenly, when
 his class
 Turned shoulder on him for a shameful match,
 And set him up as nine-pin in their talk,
 To bowl him down with jestings.'—
 There, she paused;
 And when I used the pause in doubting that
 We wronged him after all in what we feared—
 'Suppose such things should never touch him,' more
 In his high conscience (if the things should be),
 Than, when the queen sits in an upper room,
 The horses in the street can spatter her!—
 A moment, hope came,—but the lady closed
 That door and nicked the lock, and shut it out,
 Observing wisely that, 'the tender heart
 Which made him over-soft to a lower class,
 Could scarcely fail to make him sensitive
 To a higher,—how they thought, and what they felt.'

"Alas, alas," said Marian, rocking slow
 The pretty baby who was near asleep,
 The eyelids creeping over the blue balls,—
 "She made it clear, too clear—I saw the whole!
 And yet who knows if I had seen my way
 Straight out of it, by looking, though 'twas clear,
 Unless the generous lady, 'ware of this,
 Had set her own house all a-fire for me,
 To light me forwards? Leaning on my face
 Her heavy agate eyes which crushed my will,
 She told me tenderly (as when men come
 To a bedside to tell people they must die),

'She knew of knowledge,—ay, of knowledge, knew,
 That Romney Leigh had loved *her* formerly;
 And *she* loved *him*, she might say, now the chance
 Was past . . . but that, of course, he never guessed,—
 For something came between them . . . something thin
 As a cobweb . . . catching every fly of doubt
 To hold it buzzing at the window-pane
 And help to dim the daylight. Ah, man's pride
 Or woman's—which is greatest? most averse
 To brushing cobwebs? Well, but she and he
 Remained fast friends; it seemed not more than so,
 Because he had bound his hands and could not stir:
 An honourable man, if somewhat rash;
 And she, not even for Romney, would she spill
 A blot . . . as little even as a tear . . .
 Upon his marriage-contract,—not to gain
 A better joy for two than came by that!
 For, though I stood between her heart and heaven,
 She loved me wholly.' "

Did I laugh or curse?
 I think I sate there silent, hearing all,
 Ay, hearing double,—Marian's tale, at once,
 And Romney's marriage-vow, "I'll keep to THEE,"
 Which means that woman-serpent. Is it time
 For church now?
 "Lady Waldemar spoke more,"
 Continued Marian, "but, as when a soul
 Will pass out through the sweetness of a song
 Beyond it, voyaging the uphill road,—
 Even so, mine wandered from the things I heard,
 To those I suffered. It was afterward
 I shaped the resolution to the act.

For many hours we talked. What
need to talk ?

The fate was clear and close ; it
touched my eyes ;

But still the generous lady tried to
keep

The case afloat, and would not let it
go,

And argued, struggled upon Marian's
side,

Which was not Romney's ! though
she little knew

What ugly monster would take up
the end,—

What griping death within the drown-
ing death

Was ready to complete my sum of
death."

I thought,—Perhaps he's sliding now
the ring

Upon that woman's finger . . .

She went on :

"The lady, failing to prevail her way,
Upgathered my torn wishes from the
ground,

And pieced them with her strong
benevolence ;

And, as I thought I could breathe freer
air

Away from England, going without
pause,

Without farewell,—just breaking with
a jerk

The blossomed offshoot from my
thorny life,—

She promised kindly to provide the
means,

With instant passage to the colonies
And full protection,—' would commit
me straight

To one who once had been her wait-
ing-maid

And had the customs of the world,
intent

On changing England for Australia
Herself, to carry out her fortune
so,

For which I thanked the Lady Walde-
mar,

As men upon their death-beds thank
last friends

Who lay the pillow straight : it is
not much,

And yet 'tis all of which they are
capable,

This lying smoothly in a bed to die.
And so, 'twas fixed ;—and so, from
day to day,

The woman named, came in to visit
me."

Just then, the girl stopped speaking,
—sate erect,

And stared at me as if I had been a
ghost

(Perhaps I looked as white as any
ghost)

With large-eyed horror. "Does God
make," she said,

"All sorts of creatures, really, do you
think ?

Or is it that the Devil slavers them
So excellently, that we come to doubt
Who's strongest, He who makes, or
he who mars ?

I never liked the woman's face, or
voice,

Or ways : it made me blush to look
at her ;

It made me tremble if she touched
my hand ;

And when she spoke a fondling word,
I shrank,

As if one hated me, who had power to
hurt ;

And, every time she came, my veins
ran cold,

As somebody were walking on my
grave.

At last I spoke to Lady Waldemar :
'Could such an one be good to trust ?'

I asked.

Whereat the lady stroked my cheek
and laughed

Her silver-laugh (one must be born
to laugh,

To put such music in it)—'Foolish
girl,

Your scattered wits are gathering
wool beyond

The sheep-walk reaches !—leave the
thing to me.'

And therefore, half in trust, and
half in scorn

That I had heart still for another
fear

In such a safe despair, I left the thing.

"The rest is short. I was obedient :
I wrote my letter which delivered

him

From Marian, to his own prosperities,

And followed that bad guide. The lady?—hush,—
 I never blame the lady. Ladies who sit high, however willing to look down,
 Will scarce see lower than their dainty feet :
 And Lady Waldemar saw less than I,
 With what a Devil's daughter I went forth
 The swine's road, headlong over a precipice,
 In such a curl of hell-foam caught and choked,
 No shriek of soul in anguish could pierce through
 To fetch some help. They say there's help in heaven
 For all such cries. But if one cries from hell . . .
 What then?—the heavens are deaf upon that side.

" A woman . . . hear me,—let me make it plain,—
 A woman . . . not a monster . . . both her breasts
 Made right to suckle babes . . . she took me off,
 A woman also, young and ignorant, And heavy with my grief, my two poor eyes
 Near washed away with weeping, till the trees,
 The blessed unaccustomed trees and fields,
 Ran either side the train, like stranger dogs
 Unworthy of any notice,—took me off,
 So dull, so blind, and only half alive, Not seeing by what road, nor by what ship,
 Nor toward what place, nor to what end of all.—
 Men carry a corpse thus,—past the doorway, past
 The garden-gate, the children's playground, up
 The green lane,—then they leave it in the pit,
 To sleep and find corruption, cheek to cheek
 With him who stinks since Friday.
 " But suppose ;

To go down with one's soul into the grave,—
 To go down half dead, half alive, I say,
 And wake up with corruption, . . . cheek to cheek
 With him who stinks since Friday !
 There it is,
 And that's the horror of 't, Miss Leigh.
 " You feel ?
 You understand?—no, do not look at me,
 But understand. The blank, blind, weary way
 Which led . . . where'er it led . . . away, at least ;
 The shifted ship . . . to Sydney or to France . . .
 Still bound, wherever else, to another land ;
 The swooning sickness on the dismal sea,
 The foreign shore, the shameful house, the night,
 The feeble blood, the heavy-headed grief, . . .
 No need to bring their damnable drugged cup,
 And yet they brought it ! Hell's so prodigal
 Of devil's gifts . . . hunts liberally in packs,
 Will kill no poor small creature of the wilds
 But fifty red wide throats must smoke at it,—
 As his at me . . . when waking up at last . . .
 I told you that I waked up in the grave.
 " Enough so !—it is plain enough so. True,
 We wretches cannot tell out all our wrong,
 Without offence to decent happy folk. I know that we must scrupulously hint
 With half-words, delicate reserves, the thing
 Which no one scrupled we should feel in full.
 Let pass the rest, then ; only leave my oath
 Upon this sleeping child,—man's violence,

Not man's seduction, made me what
 I am,
 As lost as . . . I told *him* I should
 be lost ;
 When mothers fail us, can we help
 ourselves ?
 That's fatal !—And you call it being
 lost,
 That down came next day's noon
 and caught me there
 Half gibbering and half raving on the
 floor,
 And wondering what had happened
 up in heav'n,
 That suns should dare to shine when
 God Himself
 Was certainly abolished.

“ I was mad,—
 How many weeks, I know not,—
 many weeks.
 I think they let me go, when I was
 mad,
 They feared my eyes and loosed me,
 as boys might
 A mad dog which they had tortured.
 Up and down
 I went by road and village, over tracts
 Of open foreign country, large and
 strange,
 Crossed everywhere by long thin
 poplar-lines
 Like fingers of some ghastly skeleton
 Hand
 Through sunlight and through moon-
 light evermore
 Pushed out from hell itself to pluck
 me back,
 And resolute to get me, slow and
 sure ;
 While every roadside Christ upon his
 cross
 Hung reddening through his gory
 wounds at me,
 And shook his nails in anger, and
 came down
 To follow a mile after, wading up
 The low vines and green wheat, cry-
 ing ‘ Take the girl !
 She's none of mine from hence-
 forth.’ Then, I knew
 (But this is somewhat dimmer than
 the rest)
 The charitable peasants gave me
 bread
 And leave to sleep in straw ; and
 twice they tied,

At parting, Mary's image round my
 neck—
 How heavy it seemed ! as heavy as a
 stone ;
 A woman has been strangled with less
 weight :
 I threw it in a ditch to keep it clean
 And ease my breath a little, when
 none looked ;
 I did not need such safeguards :—
 brutal men
 Stopped short, Miss Leigh, in insult,
 when they had seen
 My face,—I must have had an awful
 look.
 And so I lived : the weeks passed on,
 —I lived.
 'Twas living my old tramp-life o'er
 again,
 But, this time, in a dream, and hunted
 round
 By some prodigious Dream-fear at my
 back
 Which ended, yet : my brain cleared
 presently,
 And there I sate, one evening, by the
 road,
 I, Marian Erle, myself, alone, undone,
 Facing a sunset low upon the flats,
 As if it were the finish of all time,—
 The great red stone upon my sepul-
 chre,
 Which angels were too weak to roll
 away.

SEVENTH BOOK

“ THE woman's motive ? shall we
 daub ourselves
 With finding roots for nettles ? 'tis
 soft clay
 And easily explored. She had the
 means,
 The monies, by the lady's liberal
 grace,
 In trust for that Australian scheme
 and me,
 Which so, that she might clutch with
 both her hands,
 And chink to her naughty uses undis-
 turbed,
 She served me (after all it was not
 strange ;
 'Twas only what my mother would
 have done)
 A motherly, unmerciful, good turn,

"Well, after. There are nettles everywhere,
 But smooth green grasses are more common still;
 The blue of heaven is larger than the cloud;
 A miller's wife at Clichy took me in
 And spent her pity on me,—made me calm
 And merely very reasonably sad.
 She found me a servant's place in Paris where
 I tried to take the cast-off life again,
 And stood as quiet as a beaten ass,
 Who, having fallen through overloads, stands up
 To let them charge him with another pack.

"A few months so. My mistress, young and light,
 Was easy with me, less for kindness than
 Because she led, herself, an easy time
 Betwixt her lover and her looking-glass,
 Scarce knowing which way she was praised the most.
 She felt so pretty and so pleased all day
 She could not take the trouble to be cross,
 But, sometimes, as I stooped to tie her shoe,
 Would tap me softly with her slender foot,
 Still restless with the last night's dancing in't,
 And say, 'Fie, pale-face! are you English girls
 All grave and silent? mass-book still, and Lent?
 And first-communion colours on your cheeks,
 Worn past the time for't? little fool, be gay!'
 At which she vanished, like a fairy, through
 A gap of silver laughter.
 "Came an hour
 When all went otherwise. She did not speak,
 But clenched her brows, and clipped me with her eyes
 As if a viper with a pair of tongs,

Too far for any touch, yet near enough
 To view the writhing creature,—then at last;
 'Stand still there, in the holy Virgin's name,
 Thou Marian; thou'rt no reputable girl,
 Although sufficient dull for twenty saints!
 I think thou mock'st me and my house,' she said;
 Confess, thou'lt be a mother in a month,
 Thou mask of saintship.'

"Could I answer her?
 The light broke in so: it meant *that* then, *that*?
 I had not thought of that, in all my thoughts,—
 Through all the cold, numb aching of my brow,
 Through all the heaving of impatient life
 Which threw me on death at intervals,—through all
 The upbreak of the fountains of my heart
 The rains had swelled too large: it could mean *that*?
 Did God make mothers out of victims, then,
 And set such pure amens to hideous deeds?
 Why not? He overblows an ugly grave
 With violets which blossom in the spring.
 And I could be a mother in a month!
 I hope it was not wicked to be glad.
 I lifted up my voice and wept, and laughed,
 To heaven, not her, until it tore my throat.
 'Confess, confess!' what was there to confess,
 Except man's cruelty, except my wrong?
 Except this anguish, or this ecstasy?
 This shame, or glory? The light woman there
 Was small to take it in: an acorn-cup
 Would take the sea in sooner.
 "'Good,' she cried;
 'Unmarried and a mother, and she laughs!

These unchaste girls are always
impudent.

Get out, intriguer! leave my house,
and trot:

I wonder you should look me in the
face,

With such a filthy secret.'

"Then I rolled
My scanty bundle up, and went my
way,

Washed white with weeping, shud-
dering head and foot

With blind hysteric passion, stagger-
ing forth

Beyond those doors. 'Twas natural,
of course,

She should not ask me where I meant
to sleep;

I might sleep well beneath the heavy
Seine,

Like others of my sort; the bed was
laid

For us. But any woman, womanly,
Had thought of him who should be in

a month,
The sinless babe that should be in a

month,
And if by chance he might be warmer

housed
Than underneath such dreary, drip-
ping eavés."

I broke on Marian there. "Yet she
herself,

A wife, I think, had scandals of her
own,

A lover, not her husband."

"Ay," she said,

"But gold and meal are measured
otherwise;

I learnt so much at school," said
Marian Erle.

"O crooked world," I cried, "ridicu-
lous

If not so lamentable! It's the way
With these light women of a thrifty

vice,
My Marian,—always hard upon the

rent
In any sister's virtue! while they

keep
Their chastity so darned with perfidy,

That, though a rag itself, it looks as
well

Across a street, in balcony or coach,

As any stronger stuff might. For my
part,

I'd rather take the wind-side of the
stews

Than touch such women with my
finger-end!

They top the poor street-walker by
their lie,

And look the better for being so much
worse:

The devil's most devilish when re-
spectable:

But you, dear, and your story."

"All the rest
Is here," she said, and signed upon
the child.

"I found a mistress-sempstress who
was kind

And let me sew in peace among her
girls;

And what was better than to draw the
threads

All day and half the night, for him,
and him?

And so I lived for him, and so he lives,
And so I know, by this time, God lives

too."

She smiled beyond the sun, and ended
so,

And all my soul rose up to take her
part

Against the world's successes, virtues,
fames.

"Come with me, sweetest sister," I
returned,

"And sit within my house, and do me
good

From henceforth, thou and thine! ye
are my own

From henceforth. I am lonely in the
world,

And thou art lonely, and the child is
half

An orphan. Come,—and, henceforth,
thou and I

Being still together, will not miss a
friend,

Nor he a father, since two mothers
shall

Make that up to him. I am journeying
south,

And in my Tuscan home I'll find a
niche,

And set thee there, my saint, the child
and thee,

And burn the lights of love before thy
face,
And ever at thy sweet look cross my-
self
From mixing with the world's prosper-
ities ;
That so, in gravity and holy calm,
We two may live on toward the truer
life."

She looked me in the face and an-
swered not,
Nor signed she was unworthy, nor
gave thanks,
But took the sleeping child and held it
out
To meet my kiss, as if requiting me
And trusting me at once. And thus,
at once,
I carried him and her to where I lived ;
She's there now, in the little room,
asleep,
I hear the soft child-breathing through
the door ;
And all three of us, at to-morrow's
break,
Pass onward, homeward, to our Italy.
Oh, Romney Leigh, I have your debts
to pay,
And I'll be just and pay them.

But yourself !
To pay your debts is scarcely difficult ;
To buy your life is nearly impossible,
Being sold away to Lamia. My head
aches ;
I cannot see my road along this dark ;
Nor can I creep and grope, as fits the
dark,
For these foot-catching robes of
womanhood :
A man might walk a little . . . but I !
—He loves
The Lamia-woman,—and I, write to
him
What stops his marriage, and destroys
his peace,—
Or what, perhaps, shall simply trouble
him,
Until she only need to touch his sleeve
With just a finger's tremulous white
flame,
Saying, " Ah,—Aurora Leigh ! a
pretty tale,
A very pretty poet ! I can guess
The motive "—then, to catch his eyes
in hers,

And vow she does not wonder,—and
they two
To break in laughter, as the sea along
A melancholy coast, and float up
higher,
In such a laugh, their fatal weeds of
love !
Ay, fatal, ay. And who shall answer
me
Fate has not hurried tides ; and if
to-night
My letter would not be a night too
late,—
An arrow shot into a man that's dead,
To prove a vain intention ? Would I
show
The new wife vile, to make the hus-
band mad ?
No, Lamia ! shut the shutters, bar the
doors
From every glimmer on thy serpent-
skin !
I will not let thy hideous secret out
To agonise the man I love—I mean
The friend I love . . . as friends love.
It is strange,
To-day while Marian told her story,
like
To absorb most listeners, how I lis-
tened chief
To a voice not hers, nor yet that
enemy's,
Nor God's in wrath . . . but one
that mixed with mine
Long years ago, among the garden-
trees,
And said to me, to me too, " Be my
wife,
Aurora ! " It is strange, with what a
swell
Of yearning passion, as a snow of
ghosts
Might beat against the impervious
doors of heaven,
I thought, " Now, if I had been a
woman, such
As God made women, to save men by
love,—
By just my love I might have saved
this man,
And made a nobler poem for the
world
Than all I have failed in." But I
failed besides
In this ; and now he's lost ! through
me alone !

And, by my only fault, his empty
house
Sucks in, at this same hour, a wind
from hell
To keep his hearth cold, make his
casements creak
For ever to the tune of plague and sin—
O Romney, O my Romney, O my
friend!
My cousin and friend! my helper,
when I would,
My love, that might be! mine!
Why, how one weeps
When one's too weary! Were a wit-
ness by,
He'd say some folly . . . that I loved
the man,
Who knows? . . . and make me laugh
again for scorn.
At strongest, women are as weak in
flesh,
As men, at weakest, vilest, are in soul:
So, hard for women to keep pace with
men!
As well give up at once, sit down at
once,
And weep as I do. Tears, tears!
why, we weep?
'Tis worth inquiry?—That we've
shamed a life,
Or lost a love, or missed a world,
perhaps?
By no means. Simply, that we've
walked too far,
Or talked too much, or felt the wind
i' the east,—
And so we weep, as if both body and
soul
Broke up in water—this way.
Poor mixed rags
Forsooth we're made of, like those
other dolls
That lean with pretty faces into fairs.
It seems as if I had a man in me,
Despising such a woman.
Yet indeed,
To see a wrong or suffering moves us
all
To undo it, though we should undo
ourselves;
Ay, all the more, that we undo our-
selves,
That's womanly, past doubt, and not
ill-moved.
A natural movement, therefore, on
my part,

To fill the chair up of my cousin's
wife,
And save him from a devil's company!
We're all so,—made so—'tis our
woman's trade
To suffer torment for another's ease.
The world's male chivalry has perished
out,
But women are knights-errant to the
last;
And, if Cervantes had been greater
still,
He had made his Dorr a Donna.
So it clears
And so we rain our skies blue.
Put away
This weakness. If, as I have just now
said,
A man's within me,—let him act him-
self,
Ignoring the poor conscious trouble of
blood
That's called the woman merely. I
will write
Plain words to England,—if too late,
too late,—
If ill-accounted, then accounted ill;
We'll trust the heavens with some-
thing.
“Dear Lord Howe,
You'll find a story on another leaf
That's Marian Erle's,—what noble
friend of yours
She trusted once, through what flagi-
tious means
To what disastrous ends;—the story's
true.
I found her wandering on the Paris
quays,
A babe upon her breast—unnatural
Unseasonable outcast on such snows
Unhewed to this time. I will tax in
this
Your friendship, friend,—if that con-
victed She
Be not his wife yet, to denounce the
facts
To himself,—but, otherwise, to let
them pass
On tip-toe like escaping murderers,
And tell my cousin, merely—Marian
lives,
Is found, and finds her home with
such a friend,
Myself, Aurora. Which good news,
'She's found,'

Will help to make him merry in his
love :

I send it, tell him, for my marriage
gift,

As good as orange-water for the
nerves,

Or perfumed gloves for headache,—
though aware

That he, except of love, is scarcely
sick ;

I mean the new love this time . . .
since last year.

Such quick forgetting on the part of
men !

Is any shrewder trick upon the cards
To enrich them ? pray instruct me
how it's done.

First, clubs,—and while you look at
clubs, it's spades ;

That's prodigy. The lightning strikes
a man,

And when we think to find him dead
and charred . . .

Why, there he is on a sudden, playing
pipes

Beneath the splintered elm-tree !
Crime and shame

And all their hoggerly trample your
smooth world,

Nor leave more foot-marks than
Apollo's kine,

Whose hoofs were muffled by the
thieving god

In tamarisk-leaves and myrtle. I'm
so sad,

So weary and sad to-night, I'm some-
what sour,—

Forgive me. To be blue and shrew
at once,

Exceeds all toleration except yours ;
But yours, I know, is infinite. Fare-
well.

To-morrow we take train for Italy.
Speak gently of me to your gracious
wife,

As one, however far, shall yet be near
In loving wishes to your house."

I sign.
And now I'll loose my heart upon a
page,

This—
" Lady Waldemar, I'm very glad
I never liked you ; which you knew
so well,

You spared me, in your turn, to like
me much.

Your liking surely had done worse for
me

Than has your loathing, though the
last appears

Sufficiently unscrupulous to hurt,
And not afraid of judgment. Now,

there's peace
Between our faces,—I stand off, as if
I judged a stranger's portrait and
pronounced

Indifferently the type was good or
bad :

What matter to me that the lines are
false,

I ask you ? Did I ever ink my lips
By drawing your name through them
as a friend's,

Or touch your hands as lovers do ?
thank God

I never did : and, since you're proved
so vile,

Ay, vile, I say,—we'll show it pre-
sently,—

I'm not obliged to nurse my friend in
you,

Or wash out my own blots, in counting
yours,

Or even excuse myself to honest souls
Who seek to touch my lip or clasp my
palm,—

' Alas, but Lady Waldemar came
first ! '

" 'Tis true, by this time, you may
near me so

That you're my cousin's wife. You've
gambled deep

As Lucifer, and won the morning-star
In that case,—and the noble house of
Leigh

Must henceforth with its good roof
shelter you :

I cannot speak and burn you up
between

Those rafters, I who am born a Leigh,
—nor speak

And pierce your breast through
Romney's, I who live

His friend and cousin !—so, you are
safe. You two

Must grow together like the tares and
wheat

Till God's great fire.—But make the
best of time.

" And hide this letter ! let it speak
no more

Than I shall, how you tricked poor
 Marian Erle,
 And set her own love digging her own
 grave
 Within her green hope's pretty garden-ground;
 Ay, sent her forth with some one of
 your sort
 To a wicked house in France,—from
 which she fled
 With curses in her eyes and ears and
 throat,
 Her whole soul choked with curses,—
 mad, in short,
 And madly scouring up and down for
 weeks
 The foreign hedgeless country, lone
 and lost,—
 So innocent, male-fiends might slink
 within
 Remote hell-corners, seeing her so
 defiled!

 "But you,—you are a woman and
 more bold.
 To do you justice, you'd not shrink to
 face . . .
 We'll say, the unfledged life in the
 other room,
 Which, treading down God's corn,
 you trod in sight
 Of all the dogs, in reach of all the
 guns,—
 Ay, Marian's babe, her poor un-
 fathered child,
 Her yearling babe!—you'd face him
 when he wakes
 And opens up his wonderful blue eyes:
 You'd meet them and not wink per-
 haps, nor fear
 God's triumph in them and supreme
 revenge,
 When, righting His creation's balance-
 scale
 (You pulled as low as Tophet) to the
 top
 Of most celestial innocence! For me
 Who am not as bold, I own those
 infant eyes
 Have set me praying.
 "While they look at heaven,
 No need of protestation in my words
 Against the place you've made them!
 let them look!
 They'll do your business with the
 heavens, be sure:

I spare you common curses.
 "Ponder this.
 If haply you're the wife of Romney
 Leigh
 (For which inheritance beyond your
 birth
 You sold that poisonous porridge
 called your soul),
 I charge you, be his faithful and true
 wife!
 Keep warm his hearth and clean his
 board, and, when
 He speaks, be quick with your obe-
 dience;
 Still grind your paltry wants and low
 desires
 To dust beneath his heel; though,
 even thus,
 The ground must hurt him,—it was
 writ of old,
 'Ye shall not yoke together ox and
 ass,'
 The nobler and ignobler. Ay, but
 you
 Shall do your part as well as such ill
 things
 Can do aught good. You shall not
 vex him,—mark,
 You shall not vex him, . . . jar him
 when he's sad,
 Or cross him when he's eager. Under-
 stand
 To trick him with apparent sym-
 pathies,
 Nor let him see thee in the face too
 near
 And unlearn thy sweet seeming. Pay
 the price
 Of lies, by being constrained to lie on
 still;
 'Tis easy for thy sort: a million
 more
 Will scarcely damn thee deeper.
 "Doing which,
 You are very safe from Marian and
 myself:
 We'll breathe as softly as the infant
 here,
 And stir no dangerous embers. Fail
 a point,
 And show our Romney wounded, ill-
 content,
 Tormented in his home, . . . we open
 mouth,
 And such a noise will follow, the Last
 Trump's

Will scarcely seem more dreadful,
 even to you ;
 You'll have no pipers after : Romney
 will
 (I know him) push you forth as none
 of his,
 All other men declaring it well done ;
 While women, even the worst, your
 like, will draw
 Their skirts back, not to brush you in
 the street ;
 And so I warn you. I'm . . . Aurora
 Leigh."

The letter written, I felt satisfied.
 The ashes, smouldering in me, were
 thrown out
 By handfuls from me : I had writ my
 heart
 And wept my tears, and now was cool
 and calm ;
 And, going straightway to the neigh-
 bouring room,
 I lifted up the curtains of the bed
 Where Marian Erle, the babe upon
 her arm,
 Both faces leaned together like a pair
 Of folded innocences, self-complete,
 Each smiling from the other, smiled
 and slept.
 There seemed no sin, no shame, no
 wrath, no grief.
 I felt, she too, had spoken words that
 night,
 But softer certainly, and said to God,—
 Who laughs in heaven perhaps, that
 such as I
 Should make ado for such as she.—
 "Defiled"

I wrote ? "defiled" I thought her ?
 Stoop,
 Stoop lower, Aurora ! get the angels'
 leave
 To creep in somewhere, humbly, on
 your knees,
 Within this round of sequestration
 white
 In which they have wrapt earth's
 foundlings, heaven's elect !

The next day, we took train to Italy
 And fled on southward in the roar of
 steam.
 The marriage-bells of Romney must
 be loud,
 To sound so clear through all ! I was
 not well ;

And truly, though the truth is like a
 jest,
 I could not choose but fancy, half the
 way,
 I stood alone i' the belfry, fifty bells
 Of naked iron, mad with merriment
 (As one who laughs and cannot stop
 himself),
 All clanking at me, in me, over me,
 Until I shrieked a shriek I could not
 hear,
 And swooned with noise,—but still,
 along my swoon,
 Was 'ware the baffled changes back-
 ward rang,
 Prepared, at each emerging sense, to
 beat
 And crash it out with clangour. I was
 weak ;
 I struggled for the posture of my
 soul
 In upright consciousness of place and
 time,
 But evermore, 'twixt waking and
 asleep,
 Slipped somehow, staggered, caught
 at Marian's eyes
 A moment (it is very good for strength
 To know that someone needs you to
 be strong),
 And so recovered what I called myself,
 For that time.

I just knew it when we swept
 Above the old roofs of Dijon. Lyons
 dropped
 A spark into the night, half trodden
 out
 Unseen. But presently the winding
 Rhone
 Washed out the moonlight large along
 his banks,
 Which strained their yielding curves
 out clear and clean
 To hold it—shadow of town and castle
 blurred
 Upon the hurrying river. Such an air
 Blew thence upon the forehead—half
 an air
 And half a water,—that I leaned and
 looked ;
 Then, turning back on Marian, smiled
 to mark
 That she looked only on her child,
 who slept,
 His face towards the moon too.
 So we passed

The liberal open country and the
close,
And shot through tunnels, like a light-
ning-wedge
By great Thor-hammers driven
through the rock,
Which, quivering through the intes-
tine blackness, splits,
And lets it in at once : the train swept
in
Athrob with effort, trembling with
resolve,
The fierce denouncing whistle wailing
on
And dying off smothered in the shud-
dering dark,
While we, self-awed, drew troubled
breath, oppressed
As other Titans, underneath the pile
And nightmare of the mountains.
Out, at last,
To catch the dawn afloat upon the
land !
—Hills, slung forth broadly and
gauntly everywhere,
Not cramp't in their foundations,
pushing wide
Rich outspreads of the vineyards and
the corn
(As if they entertained i' the name of
France),
While, down their straining sides,
streamed manifest
A soil as red as Charlemagne's
knightly blood,
To consecrate the verdure. Some one
said,
"Marseilles !" And lo, the city of
Marseilles,
With all her ships behind her, and
beyond,
The scimitar of ever-shining sea,
For right-hand use, bared blue against
the sky !

That night we spent between the purple
heaven
And purple water : I think Marian
slept ;
But I, as a dog-a-watch for his master's
foot,
Who cannot sleep or eat before he
hears,
I sate upon the deck and watched all
night,

And listened through the stars for
Italy.
Those marriage-bells I spoke of,
sounded far,
As some child's go-cart in the street
beneath
To a dying man who will not pass the
day,
And knows it, holding by a hand he
loves.
I, too, sate quiet, satisfied with death,
Sate silent : I could hear my own soul
speak,
And had my friend,—for Nature
comes sometimes
And says, "I am ambassador for
God."
I felt the wind soft from the land of
souls ;
The old miraculous mountains heaved
in sight,
One straining past another along the
shore,
The way of grand dull Odyssean ghosts
Athirst to drink the cool blue wine of
seas
And stare on voyagers. Peak pushing
peak
They stood : I watched beyond that
Tyrian belt
Of intense sea betwixt them and the
ship,
Down all their sides the misty olive-
woods
Dissolving in the weak congenial
moon,
And still disclosing some brown con-
vent-tower
That seems as if it grew from some
brown rock,—
Or many a little lighted village, dropt
Like a fallen star, upon so high a point,
You wonder what can keep it in its
place
From sliding headlong with the water-
falls
Which drop and powder all the myrtle-
groves
With spray of silver. Thus my Italy
Was stealing on us. Genoa broke
with day ;
The Dorias' long pale palace striking
out,
From green hills in advance of the
white town,
A marble finger dominant to ships,

Seen glimmering through the uncertain grey of dawn.

But then I did not think, "my Italy;"

I thought, "my father!" O my father's house,

Without his presence!—Places are too much

Or else too little, for immortal man; Too little, when love's May o'ergrows the ground,—

Too much, when that luxuriant wealth of green

Is rustling to our ankles in dead leaves. 'Tis only good to be, or here or there, Because we had a dream on such a stone,

Or this or that,—but, once being wholly waked,

And come back to the stone without the dream,

We trip upon't,—alas! and hurt ourselves;

Or else it falls on us and grinds us flat, The heaviest grave-stone on this burying earth.

—But while I stood and mused, a quiet touch

Fell light upon my arm, and, turning round,

A pair of moistened eyes convicted mine.

"What, Marian! is the babe astir so soon?"

"He sleeps," she answered; "I have crept up thrice,

And see you sitting, standing, still at watch.

I thought it did you good till now, but now"

"But now," I said, "you leave the child alone."

"And *you're* alone," she answered,—and she looked

As if I, too, were something, Sweet the help

Of one we have helped! Thanks, Marian, for that help.

I found a house, at Florence, on the hill

Of Bellosguardo. 'Tis a tower that keeps

A post of double-observation o'er The valley of Arno (holding as a hand

The outspread city) straight toward Fiesole

And Mount Morello and the setting sun,—

The Vallombrosan mountains to the right,

Which sunrise fills as full as crystal cups

Wine-filled, and red to the brim because it's red.

No sun could die, nor yet be born, unseen

By dwellers at my villa: morn and eve

Were magnified before us in the pure Illimitable space and pause of sky, Intense as angels' garments blanched with God,

Less blue than radiant. From the outer wall

Of the garden, dropped the mystic floating grey

Of olive-trees (with interruptions green From maize and vine), until 'twas caught and torn

On that abrupt black line of cypresses Which signed the way to Florence.

Beautiful

The city lay along the ample vale, Cathedral, tower and palace, piazza and street;

The river trailing like a silver cord Through all, and curling loosely, both before

And after, over the whole stretch of land

Sown whitely up and down its opposite slopes,

With farms and villas.

Many weeks had passed, No word was granted.—Last, a letter came

From Vincent Carrington:—"My dear Miss Leigh,

You've been as silent as a poet should, When any other man is sure to speak.

If sick, if vexed, if dumb, a silver-piece

Will split a man's tongue,—straight he speaks and says,

'Received that cheque.' But you!

... I send you funds To Paris, and you make no sign at all.

Remember I'm responsible and wait A sign of you, Miss Leigh.

"Meantime your book
 Is eloquent as if you were not dumb ;
 And common critics, ordinarily deaf
 To such fine meanings, and, like deaf
 men, loth
 To seem deaf, answering chance-wise,
 yes or no,
 'It must be,' or 'it must not' (most
 pronounced
 When least convinced), pronounce for
 once aright :
 You'd think they really heard,—and
 so they do . . .
 The burr of three or four who really
 hear
 And praise your book aright : Fame's
 smallest trump
 Is a great ear-trumpet for the deaf as
 posts,
 No other being effective. Fear not,
 friend ;
 We think, here, you have written a
 good book,
 And you, a woman ! It was in you—
 yes,
 I felt 'twas in you : yet I doubted
 half
 If that od-force of German Reichen-
 bach
 Which still from female finger-tips
 burns blue,
 Could strike out, as our masculine
 white heats,
 To quicken a man. Forgive me. All
 my heart
 Is quick with yours, since, just a fort-
 night since,
 I read your book and loved it.
 "Will you love
 My wife, too ? Here's my secret, I
 might keep
 A month more from you ! but I yield
 it up
 Because I know you'll write the sooner
 for't,—
 Most women (of your height even)
 counting love
 Life's only serious business. Who's
 my wife
 That shall be in a month ? you ask ?
 nor guess ?
 Remember what a pair of topaz eyes
 You once detected, turned against
 the wall,
 That morning, in my London painting-
 room ;

The face half-sketched, and slurred ;
 the eyes alone !
 But you . . . you caught them up
 with yours, and said
 'Kate Ward's eyes, surely.'—Now, I
 own the truth.
 I had thrown them there to keep them
 safe from Jove ;
 They would so naughtily find out
 their way
 To both the heads of both my Danaës,
 Where just it made me mad to look
 at them.
 Such eyes ! I could not paint or think
 of eyes
 But those,—and so I flung them into
 paint
 And turned them to the wall's care.
 Ay, but now
 I've let them out, my Kate's ! I've
 painted her
 (I'll change mystyle, and leave mytho-
 logies),
 The whole sweet face ; it looks upon
 my soul
 Like a face on water, to beget itself.
 A half-length portrait, in a hanging
 cloak
 Like one you wore once ; 'tis a little
 frayed ;
 I pressed, too, for the nude harmon-
 ious arm—
 But she . . . she'd have her way, and
 have her cloak ;
 She said she could be like you only
 so,
 And would not miss the fortune. Ah,
 my friend,
 You'll write and say she shall not miss
 your love
 Through meeting mine ? in faith, she
 would not change :
 She has your books by heart, more
 than my words,
 And quotes you up against me till I'm
 pushed
 Where, three months since, her eyes
 were ! nay, in fact,
 Nought satisfied her but to make me
 paint
 Your last book folded in her dimpled
 hands,
 Instead of my brown palette, as I
 wished
 (And, grant me, the presentment had
 been newer),

She'd grant me nothing : I've com-
 pounded for
 The naming of the wedding-day next
 month,
 And gladly too. 'Tis pretty, to re-
 mark
 How women can love women of your
 sort,
 And tie their hearts with love-knots
 to your feet,
 Grow insolent about you against
 men,
 And put us down by putting up the
 lip,
 As if a man,—there *are* such, let us
 own,
 Who write not ill,—remains a man,
 poor wretch,
 While you——! Write weaker than
 Aurora Leigh,
 And there'll be women who believe of
 you
 (Besides my Kate) that if you walked
 on sand
 You would not leave a foot-print.
 "Are you put
 To wonder by my marriage, like poor
 Leigh?
 'Kate Ward!' he said. 'Kate
 Ward!' he said anew.
 'I thought . . . ' he said, and stopped,
 —'I did not think . . .'
 And then he dropped to silence.
 "Ah, he's changed.
 I had not seen him, you're aware, for
 long,
 But went of course. I have not
 touched on this
 Through all this letter,—conscious of
 your heart,
 And writing lightlier for the heavy
 fact,
 As clocks are voluble with lead.
 "How poor,
 To say I'm sorry. Dear Leigh, dear-
 est Leigh!
 In those old days of Shropshire,—par-
 don me,—
 When he and you fought many a field
 of gold
 On what you should do, or you should
 not do,
 Make bread or verses (it just came to
 that),
 I thought you'd one day draw a silken
 peace

Through a golden ring. I thought so
 foolishly,
 The event proved,—for you went
 more opposite
 To each other, month by month, and
 year by year,
 Until this happened. God knows
 best, we say,
 But hoarsely. When the fever took
 him first,
 Just after I had writ to you in France,
 They tell me Lady Waldemar mixed
 drinks
 And counted grains, like any salaried
 nurse,
 Excepting that she wept too. Then
 Lord Howe,
 You're right about Lord Howe!
 Lord Howe's a trump;
 And yet, with such in his hand, a
 man like Leigh
 May lose, as *he* does. There's an end
 to all,—
 Yes, even this letter, though the
 second sheet
 May find you doubtful. Write a
 word for Kate:
 Even now she reads my letters like a
 wife,
 And, if she sees her name, I'll see her
 smile,
 And share the luck. So, bless you,
 friend of two!
 I will not ask you what your feeling is
 At Florence, with my pictures. I
 can hear
 Your heart a-flutter over the snow-
 hills;
 And, just to pace the Pitti with you
 once,
 I'd give a half-hour of to-morrow's
 walk
 With Kate . . . I think so. Vin-
 cent Carrington."
 The noon was hot; the air scorched
 like the sun,
 And was shut out. The closed per-
 siani threw
 Their long-scored shadows on my
 villa-floor,
 And interlined the golden atmosphere
 Straight, still,—across the pictures on
 the wall,
 The statuette on the console (of
 young Love

And Psyche made one marble by a
 kiss),
 The low couch where I leaned, the
 table near,
 The vase of lilies Marian pulled last
 night
 (Each green leaf and each white leaf
 ruled in black
 As if for writing some new text of
 fate),
 And the open letter, rested on my
 knee,—
 But there, the lines swerved, trembled,
 though I sate
 Untroubled . . . plainly . . . read-
 ing it again
 And three times. Well, he's married;
 that is clear.
 No wonder that he's married, nor
 much more
 That Vincent's therefore, "sorry."
 Why, of course,
 The lady nursed him when he was
 not well,
 Mixed drinks,—unless nepenthe was
 the drink,
 'Twas scarce worth telling. But a
 man in love
 Will see the whole sex in his mis-
 tress' hood,
 The prettier for its lining of fair rose;
 Although he catches back, and says
 at last,
 "I'm sorry." Sorry. Lady Walde-
 mar
 At prettiest, under the said hood,
 preserved
 From such a light as I could hold to
 her face
 To flare its ugly wrinkles out to
 shame,—
 Is scarce a wife for Romney, as friends
 judge,
 Aurora Leigh, or Vincent Carrington,—
 That's plain. And if he's "con-
 scious of my heart" . . .
 Perhaps it's natural, though the
 phrase is strong
 (One's apt to use strong phrases, be-
 ing in love);
 And even that stuff of "fields of
 gold," "gold rings,"
 And what he "thought," poor Vin-
 cent! what he "thought,"
 May never mean enough to ruffle me.

—Why, this room stifles. Better
 burn than choke;
 Best have air, air, although it comes
 with fire,
 Throw open blinds and windows to
 the noon
 And take a blister on my brow in-
 stead
 Of this dead weight! best, perfectly
 be stunned
 By those insufferable cicale, sick
 And hoarse with rapture of the sum-
 mer-heat,
 That sing like poets, till their hearts
 break . . . sing
 Till men say, "It's too tedious."
 Books succeed,
 And lives fail. Do I feel it so, at
 last?
 Kate loves a worn-out cloak for being
 like mine,
 While I live self-despised for being
 myself,
 And yearn toward some one else, who
 years away
 From what he is, in his turn. Strain
 a step
 For ever, yet gain no step? Are we
 such,
 We cannot, with our admirations
 even,
 Our tip-toe aspirations, touch a thing
 That's higher than we? is all a dis-
 mal flat,
 And God alone above each,—as the
 sun
 O'er level lagunes, to make them
 shine and stink,—
 Laying stress upon us with immediate
 flame,
 While we respond with our miasmal
 fog,
 And call it mounting higher, because
 we grow
 More highly fatal?
 Tush, Aurora Leigh!
 You wear your sackcloth looped in
 Cæsar's way,
 And brag your failings as mankind's.
 Be still.
 There is what's higher, in this very
 world,
 Than you can live, or catch at. Stand
 aside,
 And look at others—instance little
 Kate!

She'll make a perfect wife for Carrington.

She always has been looking round the earth

For something good and green to alight upon

And nestle into, with those soft-winged eyes

Subsiding now beneath his manly hand

'Twixt trembling lids of inexpressive joy :

I will not scorn her, after all, too much,

That so much she should love me. A wise man

Can pluck a leaf, and find a lecture in't ;

And I, too, . . . God has made me, —I've a heart

That's capable of worship, love, and loss ;

We say the same of Shakspeare's. I'll be meek,

And learn to reverence, even this poor myself.

The book, too—pass it. " A good book," says he,

And you a woman." I had laughed at that,

But long since. I'm a woman,—it is true ;

Alas, and woe to us, when we feel it most !

Then, least care have we for the crowns and goals,

And compliments on writing our good books.

The book has some truth in it, I believe :

And truth outlives pain, as the soul does life.

I know we talk our Phædons to the end

Through all the dismal faces that we make,

O'er-wrinkled with dishonouring agony

From any mortal drug. I have written truth,

And I a woman ; feebly, partially, Inapty in presentation, Romney'll add,

Because a woman. For the truth itself,

That's neither man's nor woman's, but just God's ;

None else has reason to be proud of truth :

Himself will see it sifted, disenthralled, And kept upon the height and in the light,

As far as, and no farther, than 'tis truth ;

For,—now, He has left off calling firmaments

And strata, flowers and creatures, very good,—

He says it still of truth, which is His own.

Truth, so far, in my book ;—the truth which draws

Through all things upwards ; that a twofold world

Must go to a perfect cosmos. Natural things

And spiritual,—who separates those two

In art, in morals, or the social drift, Tears up the bond of nature and brings death,

Paints futile pictures, writes unreal verse,

Leads vulgar days, deals ignorantly with men,

Is wrong, in short, at all points. We divide

This apple of life, and cut it through the pips,—

The perfect round which fitted Venus' hand

Has perished utterly as if we ate Both halves. Without the spiritual,

observe,

The natural's impossible ;—no form, No motion ! Without sensuous,

spiritual

Is inappreciable ;—no beauty or power !

And in this twofold sphere the twofold man

(And still the artist is intensely a man) Holds firmly by the natural, to reach

The spiritual beyond it,—fixes still The type with mortal vision, to pierce

through,

With eyes immortal, to the antetype Some call the ideal,—better called the real,

And certain to be called so presently

When things shall have their names.

Look long enough

On any peasant's face here, coarse
and lined,

You'll catch Antinous somewhere in
that clay,

As perfect-featured as he yearns at
Rome

From marble pale with beauty ; then
persist,

And, if your apprehension's compe-
tent,

You'll find some fairer angel at his
back,

As much exceeding him, as he the
boor,

And pushing him with empyreal dis-
dain

For ever out of sight. Ay, Carrington

Is glad of such a creed ! an artist must,
Who paints a tree, a leaf, a common
stone,

With just his hand, and finds it sud-
denly

A-piece with and conterminous to his
soul.

Why else do these things move him,
leaf or stone ?

The bird's not moved, that pecks at a
spring-shoot ;

Nor yet the horse, before a quarry,
agrazes :

But man, the twofold creature, appre-
hends

The twofold manner, in and out-
wardly,

And nothing in the world comes single
to him,

A mere itself,—cup, column, or candle-
stick,

All patterns of what shall be in the
Mount ;

The whole temporal show related
royally,

And built up to eterne significance
Through the open arms of God.

" There's nothing great !

Nor small," has said a poet of our day
(Whose voice will ring beyond the
curfew of eve

And not be thrown out by the matin's
bell),

And truly, I reiterate . . . nothing's
small !

No lily-muffled hum of a summer-bee,

But finds some coupling with the
spinning stars ;

No pebble at your foot, but proves a
sphere ;

No chaffinch, but implies the cheru-
bin :

And—glancing on my own thin,
veined wrist,—

In such a little tremour of the blood
The whole strong clamour of a vehe-
ment soul

Doth utter itself distinct. Earth's
crammed with heaven,

And every common bush afire with
God :

But only he who sees, takes off his
shoes ;

The rest sit round it, and pluck black-
berries,

And daub their natural faces un-
aware

More and more, from the first simili-
tude.

Truth, so far, in my book ! a truth
which draws

From all things upwards. I, Aurora,
still

Have felt it hound me through the
wastes of life

As Jove did Io : and, until that
Hand

Shall overtake me wholly, and, on my
head,

Lay down its large unfluctuating
peace,

The feverish gadfly pricks me up
and down,

It must be. Art's the witness of
what Is

Behind this show. If this world's
show were all,

Then imitation would be all in Art ;
There, Jove's hand gripes us !—For

we stand here, we,

If genuine artists, witnessing for
God's

Complete, consummate, undivided
work ;

—That not a natural flower can grow
on earth,

Without a flower upon the spiritual
side,

Substantial, archetypal, all aglow
With blossoming causes,—not so far

away,

But we, whose spirit-sense is somewhat cleared,

May catch at something of the bloom and breath,—

Too vaguely apprehended, though indeed

Still apprehended, consciously or not, And still transferred to picture, music, verse,

For thrilling audient and beholding souls

By signs and touches which are known to souls,—

How known, they know not,—why, they cannot find,

So straight call out on genius, say, "A man

Produced this,"—when much rather they should say,

" 'Tis insight, and he saw this."

Thus is Art
Self-magnified in magnifying a truth

Which, fully recognised, would change the world

And shift its morals. If a man could feel,

Not one day, in the artist's ecstasy, But every day, feast, fast, or working-day,

The spiritual significance burn through The hieroglyphic of material shows, Henceforward he would paint the globe with wings,

And reverence fish and fowl, the bull, the tree,

And even his very body as a man,— Which now he counts so vile, that all the towns

Make offal of their daughters for its use

On summer-nights, when God is sad in heaven

To think what goes on in His recreant world

He made quite other; while that moon He made

To shine there, at the first love's covenant,

Shines still, convictive as a marriage-ring

Before adulterous eyes.

How sure it is,
That, if we say a true word, instantly
We feel 'tis God's, not ours, and pass it on

As bread at sacrament, we taste and pass

Nor handle for a moment, as indeed We dared to set up any claim to such!

And I—my poem;—let my readers talk;

I'm closer to it—I can speak as well: I'll say, with Romney, that the book is weak,

The range uneven, the points of sight obscure,

The music interrupted.

Let us go.
The end of woman (or of man, I think)

Is not a book. Alas, the best of books Is but a word in Art, which soon

grows cramped,
Stiff, dubious-statured with the weight of years,

And drops an accent or digamma down

Some cranny of unfathomable time, Beyond the critic's reaching. Art itself,

We've called the higher life, still must feel the soul

Live past it. For more's felt than is perceived,

And more's perceived than can be interpreted,

And Love strikes higher with his lambent flame

Than Art can pile the faggots.

Is it so?
When Jove's hand meets us with

composing touch,
And when, at last, we are hushed and satisfied,—

Then, lo does not call it truth, but love?

Well, well! my father was an Englishman:

My mother's blood in me is not so strong

That I should bear this stress of Tuscan noon

And keep my wits. The town, there, seems to seethe

In this Medæan boil-pot of the sun, And all the patient hills are bubbling round

As if a prick would leave them flat. Does heaven

Keep far off, not to set us in a blaze?

Not so,—let drag your fiery fringes,
 heaven,
 And burn us up to quiet! Ah, we
 know
 Too much here, not to know what's
 best for peace;
 We have too much light here, not to
 want more fire

To purify and end us. We talk, talk,
 Conclude upon divine philosophies,
 And get the thanks of men for hope-
 ful books;

Whereat we take our own life up, and
 . . . pshaw!

Unless we piece it with another's life
 (A yard of silk to carry out our lawn),
 As well suppose my little handker-
 chief

Would cover Samminiato, church
 and all,

If out I threw it past the cypresses,
 As, in this ragged, narrow life of mine,
 Contain my own conclusions.

But at least
 We'll shut up the persiani, and sit
 down,

And when my head's done aching, in
 the cool,

Write just a word to Kate and
 Carrington.

May joy be with them! she has chosen
 well,

And he not ill.

I should be glad, I think,
 Except for Romney. Had *he* married
 Kate,

I surely, surely, should be very glad.
 This Florence sits upon me easily,

With native air and tongue. My
 graves are calm,

And do not too much hurt me. Mari-
 an's good,

Gentle and loving,—lets me hold the
 child,

Or drags him up the hills to find me
 flowers

And fill those vases, ere I'm quite
 awake,—

The grandiose red tulips, which grow
 wild,

Or else my purple lilies, Dante blew
 To a larger bubble with his prophet-
 breath;

Or one of those tall flowering reeds
 which stand

In Arno like a sheaf of sceptres, left

By some remote dynasty of dead
 gods,

To suck the stream for ages and get
 green,

And blossom wheresoe'er a hand
 divine

Had warmed the place with ichor.
 Such I've found

At early morning, laid across my
 bed,

And woke up pelted with a childish
 laugh

Which even Marian's low precipitous
 "hush"

Had vainly interposed to put away,—
 While I, with shut eyes, smile and
 motion for

The dewy kiss that's very sure to
 come

From mouth and cheeks, the whole
 child's face at once

Dissolved on mine,—as if a nosegay
 burst

Its string with the weight of roses
 overblown,

And dropt upon me. Surely I should
 be glad.

The little creature almost loves me
 now,

And calls, my name . . . "Alola,"
 stripping off

The *r*'s like thorns, to make it smooth
 enough

To take between his dainty, milk-fed
 lips,

God love him! I should certainly
 be glad,

Except, God help me, that I'm sor-
 rowful,

Because of Romney.

Romney, Romney! Well,
 This grows absurd!—too like a tune
 that runs

I' the head, and forces all things in
 the world,

Wind, rain, the creaking gnat or
 stuttering fly,

To sing itself and vex you;—yet
 perhaps

A paltry tune you never fairly liked,
 Some "I'd be a butterfly," or "C'est
 l'amour:"

We're made so,—not such tyrants to
 ourselves,

We are not slaves to nature. Some of
 us

Are turned, too, overmuch like some
poor verse
With a trick of ritournelle : the same
thing goes
And comes back ever.

Vincent Carrington
Is " sorry," and I'm sorry ; but *he's*
strong

To mount from sorrow to his heaven
of love,

And when he says at moments, " Poor,
poor Leigh,

Who'll never call his own, so true a
heart,

So fair a face even,"—he must quickly
lose

The pain of pity in the blush he has
made

By his very pitying eyes. The snow,
for him,

Has fallen in May, and finds the whole
earth warm,

And melts at the first touch of the
green grass.

But Romney,—he has chosen, after
all.

I think he had as excellent a sun
To see by, as most others, and per-
haps

Has scarce seen really worse than
some of us,

When all's said. Let him pass. I'm
not too much

A woman, not to be a man for once,
And bury all my Dead like Alaric,

Depositing the treasures of my soul
In this drained water-course, and,

letting flow
The river of life again, with com-
merce-ships

And pleasure-barges, full of silks and
songs.

Blow, winds, and help us.

Ah, we mock ourselves
With talking of the winds! perhaps
as much

With other resolutions. How it
weighs,

This hot, sick air! and how I covet
here

The Dead's provision on the river's
couch,

With silver curtains drawn on tink-
ling rings!

Or else their rest in quiet crypts,—
laid by

From heat and noise!—from those
cicale, say,

And this more vexing heart-beat.

So it is :
We covet for the soul, the body's
part,

To die and rot. Even so, Aurora,
ends

Our aspiration, who bespoke our
place

So far in the East. The Occidental
flats

Had fed us fatter, therefore? we have
climbed

Where herbage ends? we want the
beast's part now,

And tire of the angel's?—Men define
a man,

The creature who stands front-ward
to the stars,

The creature who looks inward to
himself,

The tool-wright, laughing creature.
'Tis enough :

We'll say instead, the inconsequent
creature, man,—

For that's his specialty. What
creature else

Conceives the circle, and then walks
the square?

Loves things proved bad, and leaves a
thing proved good?

You think the bee makes honey half
a year,

To loathe the comb in winter, and
desire

The little ants' food rather? But a
man—

Note men!—they are but women
after all,

As women are but Auroras!—there
are men

Born tender, apt to pale at a trodden
worm,

Who paint for pastime, in their
favourite dream,

Spruce auto-vestments flowered with
crocus-flames :

There are, too, who believe in hell,
and lie :

There are, who waste their souls in
working out

Life's problem on these sands be-
twixt two tides,

And end,—“ Now give us the beast's part, in death.”

Alas, long-suffering and most patient God,

Thou need'st be surelier God to bear with us

Than even to have made us ! Thou, aspire, aspire

From henceforth for me ! Thou who hast, Thyself,

Endured this fleshhood, knowing how, as a soaked

And sucking vesture, it would drag us down

And choke us in the melancoi'y Deep, Sustain me, that, with Thee, I walk these waves,

Resisting!—breathe me upward, Thou for me

Aspiring, Who art the Way, the Truth, the Life,—

That no truth henceforth seem indifferent,

No way to truth laborious, and no life,

Not even this life I live, intolerable !

The days went by. I took up the old days

With all their Tuscan pleasures, worn and spoiled,—

Like some lost book we dropt in the long grass

On such a happy summer-afternoon When last we read it with a loving friend,

And find in autumn, when the friend is gone,

The grass cut short, the weather changed, too late,

And stare at, as at something wonderful

For sorrow,—thinking how two hands, before,

Had held up what is left to only one, And how we smiled when such a vehement nail

Impressed the tiny dint here, which presents

This verse in fire for ever ! Tenderly And mournfully I lived. I knew the birds

And insects,—which look fathered by the flowers

And emulous of their hues : I recognised

The moths, with that great overpoise of wings

Which makes a mystery of them how at all

They can stop flying : butterflies, that bear

Upon their blue wings such red embers round,

They seem to scorch the blue air into holes

Each flight they take : and fireflies, that suspire

In short soft lapses of transported flame

Across the tingling Dark, while overhead

The constant and inviolable stars Outburn those lights-of-love : melodious owls

(If music had but one note and was sad,

'Twould sound just so), and all the silent swirl

Of bats, that seem to follow in the air Some grand circumference of a shadowy dome

To which we are blind : and then the nightingales,

Which pluck our heart across a garden-wall

(When walking in the town) and carry it

So high into the bowery almond-trees, We tremble and are afraid, and feel as if

The golden flood of moonlight unaware

Dissolved the pillars of the steady earth

And made it less substantial. And I knew

The harmless opal snakes, and large-mouthed frogs

Those noisy vaunters of their shallow streams)

And lizards, the green lightnings of the wall,

Which, if you sit down still, nor sigh too loud,

Will flatter you and take you for a stone,

And flash familiarly about your feet With such prodigious eyes in such small heads !—

I knew them (though they had somewhat dwindled from My childish imagery), and kept in mind

How last I sate among them equally, In fellowship and mateship, as a child Will bear him still toward insect, beast, and bird,

Before the Adam in him has foregone All privilege of Eden,—making friends And talk, with such a bird or such a goat,

And buying many a two-inch-wide rush-cage

To let out the caged cricket on a tree, Saying, "Oh, my dear grillino, were you cramped?"

And are you happy with the ilex-leaves?

And do you love me who have let you go?

Say *yes* in singing, and I'll understand."

But now the creatures all seemed farther off,

No longer mine, nor like me; only *there*,

A gulf between us. I could yearn indeed,

Like other rich men, for a drop of dew To cool this heat,—a drop of the early dew,

The irrecoverable child-innocence (Before the heart took fire and withered life)

When childhood might pair equally with birds;

But now . . . the birds were grown too proud for us!

Alas, the very sun forbids the dew. And I, I had come back to an empty nest,

Which every bird's too wise for. How I heard

My father's step on that deserted ground,

His voice along that silence, as he told

The names of bird and insect, tree and flower,

And all the presentations of the stars Across Valdarno, interposing still

"My child," "my child." When fathers say "my child,"

'Tis easier to conceive the universe,

And life's transitions down the steps of law.

I rode once to the little mountain-house

As fast as if to find my father there, But, when in sight of 't, within fifty yards,

I dropped my horse's bridle on his neck

And paused upon his flank. The house's front

Was cased with lingots of ripe Indian corn

In tessellated order, and device Of golden patterns: not a stone of wall

Uncovered,—not an inch of room to grow

A vine-leaf. The old porch had disappeared;

And, in the open doorway, sate a girl

At plaiting straws,—her black hair strained away

To a scarlet kerchief caught beneath her chin

In Tuscan fashion,—her full ebon eyes,

Which looked too heavy to be lifted so, Still dropt and lifted toward the mulberry-tree

On which the lads were busy with their staves

In shout and laughter, stripping all the boughs

As bare as winter, of those summer leaves

My father had not changed for all the silk

In which the ugly silkworms hide themselves.

Enough. My horse recoiled before my heart—

I turned the rein abruptly. Back we went

As fast, to Florence.

That was trial enough Of graves. I would not visit, if I could,

My father's, or my mother's any more, To see if stone-cutter or lichen beat

So early in the race, or throw my flowers,

Which could not out-smell heaven, sweeten earth.

They live too far above, that I should
 look
 So far below to find them : let me
 think
 That rather they are visiting my
 grave,
 This life here (undeveloped yet to
 life),
 And that they drop upon me, now
 and then,
 For token or for solace, some small
 weed
 Least odorous of the growths of
 paradise,
 To spare such pungent scents as kill
 with joy.
 My old Assunta, too, was dead, was
 dead—
 O land of all men's past ! for me alone,
 It would not mix its tenses. I was
 past,
 It seemed, like others,—only not in
 heaven.
 And, many a Tuscan eve, I wandered
 down
 The cypress alley, like a restless ghost
 That tries its feeble ineffectual breath
 Upon its own charred funeral-brands
 put out
 Too soon,—where, black and stiff,
 stood up the trees
 Against the broad vermilion of the
 skies.
 Such skies !—all clouds abolished in a
 sweep
 Of God's skirt, with a dazzle to
 ghosts and men,
 As down I went, saluting on the
 bridge
 The hem of such, before 'twas caught
 away
 Beyond the peaks of Lucca. Under-
 neath,
 The river, just escaping from the
 weight
 Of that intolerable glory, ran
 In acquiescent shadow murmurously :
 And up, beside it, streamed the festa-
 folk
 With fellow-murmurs from their feet
 and fans
 (With *issimo* and *ino* and sweet poise
 Of vowels in their pleasant scandalous
 talk),
 Returning from the grand-duke's
 dairy-farm

Before the trees grew dangerous at
 eight
 (For, "trust no tree by moonlight,"
 Tuscans say),
 To eat their ice at Doni's tenderly,—
 Each lovely lady close to a cavalier
 Who holds her dear fan while she
 feeds her smile
 On meditative spoonfuls of vanille,
 He breathing hot protesting vows of
 love,
 Enough to thaw her cream, and
 scorch his beard. "
 'Twas little matter. I could pass
 them by
 Indifferently, not fearing to be known,
 No danger of being wrecked upon a
 friend,
 And forced to take an iceberg for an
 isle !
 The very English, here, must wait to
 learn
 To hang the cobweb of their gossip
 out
 And catch a fly. I'm happy. It's
 sublime,
 This perfect solitude of foreign lands !
 To be, as if you had not been till
 then,
 And were then, simply that you chose
 to be :
 To spring up, not be brought forth
 from the ground,
 Like grasshoppers at Athens, and
 skip thrice
 Before a woman makes a pounce on
 you
 And plants you in her hair !—
 possess, yourself,
 A new world all alive with creatures
 new,
 New sun, new moon, new flowers, new
 people—ah,
 And be possessed by none of them !
 no right
 In one, to call your name, inquire
 your where,
 Or what you think of Mister Some-
 one's book,
 Or Mister Other's marriage, or decease,
 Or how's the headache which you had
 last week,
 Or why you look so pale still, since
 it's gone ?
 —Such most surprising riddance of
 one's life

Comes next one's death ; it's disem-
bodiment
Without the pang. I marvel, people
choose
To stand stockstill like fakirs, till the
moss
Grows on them, and they cry out,
self-admired,
"How verdant and how virtuous !"
Well, I'm glad :
Or should be, if grown foreign to my-
self
As surely as to others.

Musing so,

I walked the narrow unrecognising
streets,
Where many a palace-front peers
gloomily
Through stony vizors iron-barred
(prepared
Alike, should foe or lover pass that
way,
For guest or victim), and came wan-
dering out
Upon the churches with mild open
doors
And plaintive wail of vespers, where a
few,
Those chiefly women, sprinkled round
in blots
Upon the dusky pavement, knelt and
prayed
Toward the altar's silver glory. Oft
a ray
(I liked to sit and watch) would
tremble out,
Just touch some face more lifted,
more in need,
Of course a woman's — while I
dreamed a tale
To fit its fortunes. There was one
who looked
As if the earth had suddenly grown
too large
For such a little humpbacked thing as
she ;
The pitiful black kerchief round her
neck
Sole proof she had had a mother.
One, again,
Looked sick for love—seemed praying
some soft saint
To put more virtue in the new fine
scarf
She spent a fortnight's meals on,
yesterday,

That cruel Gigi might return his
eyes
From Giuliana. There was one, so
old,
So old, to kneel grew easier than to
stand,—
So solitary, she accepts at last
Our Lady for her gossip, and frets on
Against the sinful world which goes
its rounds
In marrying and being married, just
the same
As when 'twas almost good and had
the right
(Her Gian alive, and she herself
eighteen).
And yet, now even, if Madonna willed,
She'd win a tern in Thursday's lottery,
And better all things. Did she dream
for nought,
That, boiling cabbage for the fast-
day's soup,
It smelt like blessed entrails ? such a
dream
For nought : would sweetest Mary
cheat her so,
And lose that certain candle, straight
and white
As any fair grand-duchess in her teens,
Which otherwise should flare here in a
week ?
Benigna sis, thou beauteous Queen
of heaven !

I sate there musing, and imagining
Such utterance from such faces : poor
blind souls
That writhe toward heaven along
the devil's trail,—
Who knows, I thought, but He may
stretch His hand
And pick them up ? 'tis written in the
Book,
He heareth the young ravens when
they cry ;
And yet they cry for carrion.—O my
God,—
And we, who make excuses for the
rest,
We do it in our measure. Then I
knelt,
And dropped my head upon the pave-
ment too,
And prayed, since I was foolish in
desire

Like other creatures, craving offal-
food,
That He would stop His ears to what
I said,
And only listen to the run and beat
Of this poor, passionate, helpless
blood—

And then
I lay, and spoke not. But He heard
in heaven.
So many Tuscan evenings passed the
same!

I could not lose a sunset on the bridge,
And would not miss a vigil in the
church,

And liked to mingle with the out-
door crowd

So strange and gay and ignorant of
my face,

For men you know not, are as good as
trees.

And only once, at the Santissima,
I almost chanced upon a man I
knew,

Sir Blaise Delorme. He saw me
certainly,

And somewhat hurried, as he crossed
himself,

The smoothness of the action,—then
half bowed,

But only half, and merely to my
shade,

I slipped so quick behind the por-
phyry plinth,

And left him dubious if 'twas really I,
Or peradventure Satan's usual trick
To keep a mounting saint uncanon-
ised.

But I was safe for that time, and he
too;

The argent angels in the altar-flare
Absorbed his soul next moment. The
good man!

In England we were scarce acquaint-
ances,

That here in Florence he should keep
my thought

Beyond the image on his eye, which
came

And went: and yet his thought
disturbed my life:

For, after that, I oftener sate at home
On evenings, watching how they fined
themselves

With gradual conscience to a perfect
night,

Until the moon, diminished to a
curve,

Lay out there, like a sickle for His
hand

Who cometh down at last to reap the
earth.

At such times, ended seemed my
trade of verse;

I feared to jingle bells upon my robe
Before the four-faced silent cherubim:
With God so near me, could I sing of
God?

I did not write, nor read, nor even
think,

But sate absorbed amid the quicken-
ing glooms,

Most like some passive broken lump
of salt

Dropt in by chance to a bowl of æno-
mel,

To spoil the drink a little, and lose
itself,

Dissolving slowly, slowly, until lost.

EIGHTH BOOK

ONE eve it happened, when I sate
alone,

Alone, upon the terrace of my tower,
A book upon my knees, to counter-
feit

The reading that I never read at all,
While Marian, in the garden down
below,

Knelt by the fountain I could just
hear thrill

The drowsy silence of the exhausted
day,

And peeled a new fig from that purple
heap

In the grass beside her,—turning out
the red

To feed her eager child (who sucked
at it)

With vehement lips across a gap of
air

As he stood opposite, face and curls
a-flame

With that last sun-ray crying, "give
me, give,"

And stamping with imperious baby-
feet:

We're all born princes)—something
startled me,—

The laugh of sad and innocent souls,
that breaks

Abruptly, as if frightened at itself;

'Twas Marian laughed. I saw her
glance above
In sudden shame that I should hear
her laugh,
And straightway dropped my eyes
upon my book,
And knew, the first time, 'twas Boc-
caccio's tales,
The Falcon's,—of the lover who for
love
Destroyed the best that loved him.
Some of us
Do it still, and then we sit and laugh
no more;
Laugh *you*, sweet Marian! you've been
right to laugh,
Since God Himself is for you, and a
child!
For me there's somewhat less,—and
so, I sigh.

The heavens were making room to
hold the night,
The sevenfold heavens unfolding all
their gates
To let the stars out slowly (prophe-
sied
In close-approaching advent, not
discerned),
While still the cue-owls from the
cypresses
Of the Poggio called and counted
every pulse
Of the skyey palpitation. Gradually
The purple and transparent shadows
slow
Had filled up the whole valley to the
brim,
And flooded all the city, which you
saw
As some drowned city in some en-
chanted sea,
Cut off from nature,—drawing you
who gaze,
With passionate desire, to leap and
plunge,
And find a sea-king with a voice of
waves,
And treacherous soft eyes, and
slippery locks
You cannot kiss but you shall bring
away
Their salt upon your lips. The
Duomo bell
Strikes ten, as if it struck ten fathoms
down,

So deep; and fifty churches answer
it
The same, with fifty various instances.
Some gaslights tremble along squares
and streets;
The Pitti's palace-front is drawn in
fire;
And, past the quays, Maria Novella's
Place,
In which the mystic obelisks stand
up
Triangular, pyramidal, each based
On a single trine of brazen tortoisés,
To guard that fair church, Buona-
rotti's Bride,
That stares out from her large blind
dial-eyes,
Her quadrant and armillary dials,
black
With rhythms of many suns and
moons, in vain
Inquiry for so rich a soul as his,—
Methinks I have plunged, I see it all so
clear . . .
And, oh my heart . . . the sea-king!
In my ears
The sound of waters. There he stood,
my king!
I felt him, rather than beheld him.
Up
I rose, as if he were my king indeed,
And then sate down, in trouble at
myself,
And struggling for my woman's
empire.
'Tis pitiful; but women are so made:
We'll die for you, perhaps,—'tis prob-
able;
But we'll not spare you an inch of our
full height:
We'll have our whole just stature,—
five feet four,
Though laid out in our coffins: piti-
ful!
"—You, Romney!—Lady Walde-
mar is here?"
He answered in a voice which was not
his,
"I have her letter; you shall read it
soon:
But first, I must be heard a little, I,
Who have waited long and travelled
far for that,
Although you thought to have shut a
tedious book

And farewell. Ah, you dog-eared
such a page,
And here you find me."

Did he touch my hand,
Or but my sleeve? I trembled, hand
and foot,—

He must have touched me.—"Will
you sit?" I asked,
And motioned to a chair; but down
he sate,

A little slowly, as a man in doubt,
Upon the couch beside me,—couch
and chair

Being wheeled upon the terrace.

"You are come,
My cousin Romney?—this is wonder-
ful.

But all is wonder on such summer-
nights;

And nothing should surprise us any
more,

Who see that miracle of stars.
Behold."

I signed above, where all the stars
were out,

As if an urgent heat had started there
A secret writing from a sombre page,
A blank last moment, crowded
suddenly

With hurrying splendours.

"Then you do not know"—
He murmured.

"Yes, I know," I said, "I know.
I had the news from Vincent Carrington.

And yet I did not think you'd leave
the work

In England, for so much even,—
though, of course,

You'll make a work-day of your
holiday,

And turn it to our Tuscan people's
use,—

Who much need helping since the
Austrian boar

(So bold to cross the Alp by Lom-
bardy

And dash his brute front unabashed
against

The steep snow-bosses of that shield of
God

Who soon shall rise in wrath and
shake it clear),

Came hither also,—raking up our
vines

And olive-gardens with his tyrannous
tusks,
And rolling on our maize with all his
swine."

"You had the news from Vincent
Carrington,"

He echoed,—picking up the phrase
beyond,

As if he knew the rest was merely talk:
To fill a gap and keep out a strong
wind,

"You had, then, Vincent's personal
news?"

"His own,"

I answered. "All that ruined world
of yours

Seems crumbling into marriage.
Carrington

Has chosen wisely."

"Do you take it so?"

He cried, "and is it possible at
last" . . .

He paused there,—and then, inward
to himself,

"Too much at last, too late!—yet
certainly" . . .

(And there his voice swayed as an
Alpine plank

That feels a passionate torrent under-
neath)

"The knowledge, had I known it,
first or last,

Could scarce have changed the actual
case for me.

And best, for her, at this time."

Nay, I thought,
He loves Kate Ward, it seems, now,

like a man,
Because he has married Lady Walde-
mar.

Ah, Vincent's letter said how Leigh
was moved

To hear that Vincent was betrothed
to Kate.

With what cracked pitchers go we to
deep wells

In this world! Then I spoke,—"I
did not think,

My cousin, you had ever known
Kate Ward."

"In fact I never knew her. 'Tis
enough

That Vincent did, before he chose his
wife

For other reasons than those topaz eyes

I've heard of. Not to undervalue them,

For all that. One takes up the world with eyes."

—Including Romney Leigh, I thought again,

Albeit he knows them only by repute. How vile must all men be, since *he's* a man.

His deep pathetic voice, as if he guessed

I did not surely love him, took the word ;

" You never got a letter from Lord Howe

A month back, dear Aurora ? "

" None," I said.

" I felt it was so," he replied : " Yet, strange !

Sir Blaise Delorme has passed through Florence ? "

" Ay, By chance I saw him in Our Lady's church

(I saw him, mark you, but he saw not me),

Clean-washed in holy water from the count

Of things terrestrial,—letters and the rest ;

He had crossed us out together with his sins.

Ay, strange ; but only strange that good Lord Howe

Preferred him to the post because of pauls.

For me I'm sworn to never trust a man—

At least with letters."

" There were facts to tell,—To smooth with eye and accent.

Howe supposed . . . Well, well, no matter ! there was

dubious need ; You heard the news from Vincent

Carrington. And yet perhaps you had been startled

less To see me, dear Aurora, if you had

read That letter."

—Now he sets me down as vexed. I think I've draped myself in woman's pride

To a perfect purpose. Oh, I'm vexed, it seems !

My friend Lord Howe deposes his friend Sir Blaise,

To break as softly as a sparrow's egg That lets a bird out tenderly, the

news Of Romney's marriage to a certain saint ;

To *smooth with eye and accent*,—indicate

His possible presence. Excellently well

You've played your part, my Lady Waldemar,—

As I've played mine.

" Dear Romney," I began, " You did not use, of old, to be so like

A Greek king coming from a taken Troy,

'Twas needful that precursors spread your path

With three-piled carpets, to receive your foot

And dull the sound of 't. For myself, be sure,

Although it frankly ground the gravel here,

I still can bear it. Yet I'm sorry, too,

To lose this famous letter, which Sir Blaise

Has twisted to a lighter absently To fire some holy taper with : Lord

Howe Writes letters good for all things but to lose ;

And many a flower of London gossipry

Has dropt wherever such a stem broke off,—

Of course I know that, lonely among my vines,

Where nothing's talked of, save the blight again,

And no more Chianti ! Still the letter's use

As preparation. . . . Did I start indeed ?

Last night I started at a cockchafer, And shook a half-hour after. Have

you learnt No more of women, 'spite of privilege,

Than still to take account too seriously
Of such weak flutterings? Why, we
like it, sir,—
We get our powers and our effects
that way.
The trees stand stiff and still at time
of frost,
If no wind tears them; but, let summer
come,
When trees are happy,—and a
breath avails
To set them trembling through a
million leaves
In luxury of emotion. Something
less
It takes to move a woman: let her
start
And shake at pleasure,—nor con-
clude at yours,
The winter's bitter,—but the sum-
mer's green."

He answered, "Be the summer ever
green
With you, Aurora!—though you
sweep your sex
With somewhat bitter gusts from
where you live
Above them,—whirling downward
from your heights
Your very own pine-cones, in a grand
disdain
Of the lowland burrs with which you
scatter them.
So high and cold to others and your-
self,
A little less to Romney, were unjust,
And thus, I would not have you. Let
it pass:
I feel content, so. You can bear
indeed
My sudden step beside you: but for
me,
'Twould move me sore to hear your
softened voice,—
Aurora's voice,—if softened unaware
In pity of what I am."

Ah friend, I thought,
As husband of the Lady Waldemar
You're granted very sorely pitiable!
And yet Aurora Leigh must guard
her voice
From softening in the pity of your
case,
As if from lie or licence. Certainly

We'll soak up all the slush and soil of
life
With softened voices, ere we come to
you.

At which I interrupted my own
thought
And spoke out calmly. "Let us
ponder, friend.
Whate'er our state, we must have
made it first;
And though the thing displease us,
ay, perhaps
Displease us warrantably, never
doubt
That other states, though possible
once, and then
Rejected by the instinct of our lives,—
If then adopted, had displeased us
more
Than this, in which the choice, the
will, the love,
Has stamped the honour of a patent
act
From henceforth. What we choose,
may not be good;
But, that we choose it, proves it good
for *us*
Potentially, fantastically, now
Or last year, rather than a thing we
saw,
And saw no need for choosing. Moths
will burn
Their wings,—which proves that
light is good for moths,
Who else had flown not, where they
agonise."

"Ay, light is good," he echoed, and
there paused.
And then abruptly, . . . "Marian.
Marian's well?"

I bowed my head, but found no word.
'Twas hard
To speak of *her* to Lady Waldemar's
New husband. How much did he
know, at last?
How much? how little?—He
would take no sign,
But straight repeated,—“Marian. Is
she well?”

"She's well," I answered.
She was there in sight
An hour back, but the night had
drawn her home;

Where still I heard her in an upper
room,
Her low voice singing to the child in
bed,
Who restless with the summer-heat
and play
And slumber snatched at noon, was
long sometimes
At falling off, and took a score of
songs
And mother-hushes, ere she saw him
sound.

"She's well," I answered.

"Here?" he asked.

"Yes, here."

He stopped and sighed. "That shall
be presently,
But now this must be. I have words
to say,
And would be alone to say them, I
with you,
And no third troubling."

"Speak then," I returned,
"She will not vex you."

At which, suddenly
He turned his face upon me with its
smile,
As if to crush me. "I have read your
book,
Aurora."

"You have read it," I replied,
"And I have writ it,—we have done
with it.
And now the rest?"

"The rest is like the first."
He answered,—"for the book is in
my heart,
Lives in me, wakes in me, and dreams
in me:
My daily bread tastes of it,—and my
wine
Which has no smack of it, I pour it
out;
It seems unnatural drinking."

Bitterly
I took the word up; "Never waste
your wine.
The book lived in me ere it lived in
you;
I know it closer than another does,
And that it's foolish, feeble, and
afraid,

And all unworthy so much compli-
ment.
Beseech you, keep your wine,—and,
when you drink,
Still wish some happier fortune to
your friend,
Than even to have written a far
better book."

He answered gently, "That is conse-
quent:
The poet looks beyond the book he
has made,
Or else he had not made it. If a man
Could make a man, he'd henceforth
be a god
In feeling what a little thing is man:
It is not my case. And this special
book,
I did not make it, to make light of it:
It stands above my knowledge, draws
me up;
'Tis high to me. It may be that the
book
Is not so high, but I so low, instead;
Still high to me. I mean no compli-
ment:

I will not say there are not, young or
old,
Male writers, ay, or female,—let it
pass,
Who'll write us richer and completer
books.
A man may love a woman perfectly,
And yet by no means ignorantly
maintain
A thousand women have not larger
eyes:
Enough that she alone has looked at
him
With eyes that, large or small, have
won his soul.
And so, this book, Aurora,—so, your
book."

"Alas," I answered, "is it so, in-
deed?"
And then was silent.

"Is it so, indeed,"
He echoed, "that *alas* is all your
word?"
I said,—"I'm thinking of a far-off
June,
When you and I, upon my birthday
once,

Discoursed of life and art, with both
untried.

I'm thinking, Romney, how 'twas
morning then,
And now 'tis night."

"And now," he said, "'tis night."

"I'm thinking," I resumed, "'tis
somewhat sad

That if I had known, that morning
in the dew,

My cousin Romney would have said
such words

On such a night, at close of many
years,

In speaking of a future book of mine,
It would have pleased me better as a
hope,

Than as an actual grace it can at all.
That's sad, I'm thinking."

"Ay," he said, "'tis night."

"And there," I added lightly, "are
the stars!

And here, we'll talk of stars, and not
of books."

"You have the stars," he mur-
mured,— "it is well:

Be like them! shine, Aurora, on my
dark,

Though high and cold and only like a
star,

And for this short night only,—you,
who keep

The same Aurora of the bright June
day

That withered up the flowers before
my face,

And turned me from the garden ever-
more

Because I was not worthy. Oh, de-
served,

Deserved! That I, who verily had
not learnt

God's lesson half, attaining as a
dunce

To obliterate good words with frac-
tious thumbs

And cheat myself of the context,—I
should push

Aside, with male ferocious impudence,
The world's Aurora who had conned
her part

On the other side the leaf! ignore her
so,

Because she was a woman and a
queen,

And had no beard to bristle through
her song,—

My teacher, who has taught me with
a book,

My Miriam, whose sweet mouth,
when nearly drowned

I still heard singing on the shore!
Deserved,

That here I should look up into the
stars

And miss the glory" . . .
"Can I understand?"

I broke in. "You speak wildly,
Romney Leigh,

Or I hear wildly. In that morning-
time

We recollect, the roses were too
red,

The trees too green, reproach too
natural

If one should see not what the other
saw:

And now, it's night, remember; we
have shades

In place of colours; we are now grown
cold,

And old, my cousin Romney. Par-
don me,—

I'm very happy that you like my
book,

And very sorry that I quoted back
A ten years' birthday; 'twas so mad

a thing
In any woman, I scarce marvel much

You took it for a venturesome piece of
spite,

Provoking such excuses, as indeed
I cannot call you slack in."

"Understand,"
He answered sadly, "something, if
but so.

This night is softer than an English
day,

And men may well come hither when
they're sick

To draw in easier breath from larger
air.

'Tis thus with me; I've come to you,
—to you,

My Italy of women, just to breathe
My soul out once before you, ere I

go,
As humble as God makes me at the

last

(I thank Him), quite out of the way of men,
 And yours, Aurora,—like a punished child,
 His cheeks all blurred with tears and naughtiness,
 To silence in a corner. I am come
 To speak, beloved " . . .
 "Wisely, cousin Leigh,
 And worthily of us both!"
 "Yes, worthily;
 For this time I must speak out and confess
 That I, so truculent in assumption once,
 So absolute in dogma, proud in aim,
 And fierce in expectation,—I, who felt
 The whole world tugging at my skirts for help,
 As if no other man than I, could pull,
 Nor woman, but I led her by the hand,
 Nor cloth hold, but I had it in my coat,—
 Do know myself to-night for what I was
 On that June-day, Aurora. Poor bright day,
 Which meant the best . . . a woman and a rose, . . .
 And which I smote upon the cheek with words,
 Until it turned and rent me! Young you were,
 That birthday, poet, but you talked the right:
 While I, . . . I built up follies like a wall
 To intercept the sunshine and your face.
 Your face! that's worse."
 "Speak wisely, cousin Leigh."
 "Yes, wisely, dear Aurora, though too late:
 But then, not wisely. I was heavy then,
 And stupid, and distracted with the cries
 Of tortured prisoners in the polished brass
 Of that Phalarian bull, society,—
 Which seems to bellow bravely like ten bulls,

But, if you listen, moans and cries instead
 Despairingly, like victims tossed and gored
 And trampled by their hoofs. I heard the cries
 Too close: I could not hear the angels lift
 A fold of rustling air, nor what they said
 To help my pity. I beheld the world
 As one great famishing carnivorous mouth,—
 A huge, deserted, callow, black, bird Thing,
 With piteous open beak that hurt my heart,
 Till down upon the filthy ground I dropped,
 And tore the violets up to get the worms.
 'Worms, worms,' was all my cry: an open mouth,
 A gross want, bread to fill it to the lips,
 No more! That poor men narrowed their demands
 To such an end, was virtue, I supposed,
 Adjudicating that to see it so
 Was reason. Oh, I did not push the case
 Up higher, and ponder how it answers, when
 The rich take up the same cry for themselves,
 Professing equally,—'an open mouth,
 A gross want, food to fill us, and no more!'
 Why that's so far from virtue, only vice
 Finds reason for it! That makes libertines:
 That slurs our cruel streets from end to end
 With eighty-thousand women in one smile,
 Who only smile at night beneath the gas:
 The body's satisfaction and no more,
 Being used for argument against the soul's,
 Here too! the want, here too, implying the right.
 —How dark I stood that morning in the sun,

My best Aurora, though I saw your
 eyes,—
 When first you told me . . . oh, I
 recollect
 The words . . . and how you lifted
 your white hand,
 And how your white dress and your
 burnished curls
 Went greating round you in the still
 blue air,
 As if an inspiration from within
 Had blown them all out when you
 spoke the same,
 Even these,—‘ You will not compass
 your poor ends
 Of barley-feeding and material
 ease,
 Without the poet’s individualism
 To work your universal. It takes a
 soul,
 To move a body,—it takes a high-
 souled man,
 To move the masses . . . even to a
 cleaner sty:
 It takes the ideal, to blow an inch
 inside
 The dust of the actual: and your
 Fouriers failed,
 Because not poets enough to under-
 stand
 That life develops from within.’ I
 say
 Your words,—I could say other words
 of yours ;
 For none of all your words has been
 more lost
 Than sweet verberna, which, being
 brushed against,
 Will hold you three hours after by the
 smell,
 In spite of long walks on the windy
 hills.
 But these words dealt in sharper per-
 fume,—these
 Were ever on me, stinging through my
 dreams,
 And saying themselves for ever o’er
 my acts
 Like some unhappy verdict. That I
 failed,
 Is certain. Sty or no sty, to con-
 trive
 Theswine’s propulsion toward the pre-
 cipice,
 Proved easy and plain. I subtly or-
 ganised

And ordered, built the cards up high
 and higher,
 Till, some one breathing, all fell flat
 again ;
 In setting right society’s wide wrong,
 Mere life’s so fatal ! So I failed indeed
 Once, twice, and oftener,—hearing
 through the rents
 Of obstinate purpose, still those words
 of yours,
 ‘ You will not compass your poor ends,
 not you ! ’
 But harder than you said them ; every
 time
 Still farther from your voice, until
 they came
 To overcrow me with triumphant
 scorn
 Which vexed me to resistance. Set
 down this
 For condemnation,—I was guilty
 here :
 I stood upon my deed and fought my
 doubt,
 As men will,—for I doubted,—till at
 last
 My deed gave way beneath me sud-
 denly,
 And left me what I am. The curtain
 dropped,
 My part quite ended, all the foot-
 lights quenched,
 My own soul hissing at me through
 the dark,
 I, ready for confession,—I was wrong,
 I’ve sorely failed ; I’ve slipped the
 ends of life,
 I yield ; you have conquered.”
 “ Stay,” I answered him ;
 “ I’ve something for your hearing,
 also. I
 Have failed too.”
 “ You ! ” he said, “ you’re
 very great ;
 The sadness of your greatness fits you
 well :
 As if the plume upon a hero’s casque
 Should nod a shadow upon his victor
 face.”
 I took him up austere, —“ You have
 read
 My book, but not my heart ; for re-
 collect,
 ’Tis writ in Sanscrit, which you bungle
 at.

I've surely failed, I know ; if failure means
 To look back sadly on work gladly done,—
 To wander on my mountains of Delight,
 So called (I can remember a friend's words
 As well as you, sir), weary and in want
 Of even a sheep-path, thinking bitterly . . .
 Well, well ! no matter. I but say so much,
 To keep you, Romney Leigh, from saying more,
 And let you feel I am not so high indeed,
 That I can bear to have you at my foot,—
 Or safe, that I can help you. That June-day,
 Too deeply sunk in craterous sunsets now
 For you or me to dig it up alive ;
 To pluck it out all bleeding with spent flame
 At the roots, before those moralising stars
 We have got instead,—that poor lost day, you said
 Some words as truthful as the thing of mine
 You care to keep in memory : and I hold
 If I, that day, and, being the girl I was,
 Had shown a gentler spirit, less arrogance,
 It had not hurt me. Ah, you'll not mistake
 The point here. I but only think, you see,
 More justly, that's more humbly, of myself,
 Than when I tried a crown on and supposed . . .
 Nay, laugh, sir,—I'll laugh with you !
 —pray you, laugh.
 I've had so many birthdays since that day,
 I've learnt to prize mirth's opportunities,
 Which come too seldom. Was it you who said
 I was not changed ? the same Aurora ?
 Ah,

B.P.

We could laugh there, too ! Why, Ulysses' dog
 Knew *him*, and wagged his tail and died : but if
 I had owned a dog, I too, before my Troy,
 And, if you brought him here, . . . I warrant you
 He'd look into my face, bark lustily,
 And live on stoutly, as the creatures will
 Whose spirits are not troubled by long loves.
 A dog would never know me, I'm so changed ;
 Much less a friend . . . except that you're misled
 By the colour of the hair, the trick of the voice,
 Like that Aurora Leigh's."
 "Sweet trick of voice !
 I would be a dog for this, to know it at last,
 And die upon the falls of it. O love,
 O best Aurora ! are you then so sad,
 You scarcely had been sadder as my wife ? "

"Your wife, sir ! I must certainly be changed,
 If I, Aurora, can have said a thing
 So light, it catches at the knightly spurs
 Of a noble gentleman like Romney Leigh,
 And trips him from his honourable sense
 Of what befits " . . .
 "You wholly misconceive,"
 He answered.

I returned,—“I'm glad of it ;
 But keep from misconception, too, yourself :
 I am not humbled to so low a point,
 Nor so far saddened. If I am sad at all,
 Ten layers of birthdays on a woman's head,
 Are apt to fossilise her girlish mirth,
 Though ne'er so merry : I'm perforce more wise,
 And that, in truth, means sadder.
 For the rest,
 Look here, sir : I was right upon the whole,

K K

That birthday morning. 'Tis impos-
 sible
 To get at men excepting through
 their souls,
 However open their carnivorous
 jaws ;
 And poets get directlier at the soul,
 Than any of our economists :—for
 which,
 You must not overlook the poet's
 work
 When scheming for the world's neces-
 sities.
 The soul's the way. Not even Christ
 Himself
 Can save a man else than as He holds
 man's soul ;
 And therefore did He come into our
 flesh,
 As some wise hunter creeping on his
 knees
 With a torch, into the blackness of
 some cave,
 To face and quell the beast there,—
 take the soul,
 And so possess the whole man, body
 and soul.
 I said, so far, right, yes ; not farther,
 though :
 We both were wrong that June-day,
 —both as wrong
 As an east wind had been. I who
 talked of art,
 And you who grieved for all men's
 griefs . . . what then ?
 We surely make too small a part for
 God
 In these things. What we are, im-
 ports us more
 Than what we eat ; and life, you've
 granted me,
 Develops from within. But innermost
 Of the inmost, most interior of the
 interne,
 God claims His own, Divine humanity
 Renewing nature,—or the piercingest
 verse,
 Prest in by subtlest poet, still must
 keep
 As much upon the outside of a man,
 As the very bowl, in which he dips his
 beard.
 —And then . . . the rest. I cannot
 surely speak.
 Perhaps I doubt more than you
 doubted then,

If I, the poet's veritable charge,
 Have borne upon my forehead. If I
 have,
 It might feel somewhat liker to a
 crown,
 The foolish green one even.—Ah, I
 think,
 And chiefly when the sun shines, that
 I've failed.
 But what then, Romney ? Though
 we fail indeed,
 You . . . I . . . a score of such
 weak workers . . . He
 Fails never. If He cannot work by us,
 He will work over us. Does He want
 a man,
 Much less a woman, think you ? Every
 time
 The star winks there, so many souls
 are born,
 Who all shall work too. Let our
 own be calm :
 We should be ashamed to sit beneath
 those stars,
 Impatient that we're nothing."
 "Could we sit
 just so for ever, sweetest friend," he
 said,
 "My failure would seem better than
 success.
 And yet, indeed, your book has dealt
 with me
 More gently, cousin, than you ever
 will !
 The book brought down entire the
 bright June-day,
 And set me wandering in the garden-
 walks,
 And let me watch the garland in a
 place,
 You blushed so . . . nay, forgive
 me ; do not stir :
 I only thank the book for what it
 taught,
 And what, permitted. Poet, doubt
 yourself ;
 But never doubt that you're a poet
 to me
 From henceforth. Ah, you've writ-
 ten poems, sweet,
 Which moved me in secret, as the sap
 is moved
 In still March-branches, signless as a
 stone :
 But this last book o'ercame me like
 soft rain

Which falls at midnight, when the
tightened bark
Breaks out into unhesitating buds,
And sudden protestations of the
spring.
In all your other books, I saw but
you :
A man may see the moon so, in a
pond,
And not be nearer therefore to the
moon,
Nor use the sight . . . except to
drown himself :
And so I forced my heart back from
the sight ;
For what had I, I thought, to do
with *her*,—
Aurora . . . Romney ? But, in this
last book,
You showed me something separate
from yourself,
Beyond you ; and I bore to take it in,
And let it draw me. You have shown
me truths,
O June-day friend, that help me now
at night,
When June is over ! truths not yours,
indeed,
But set within my reach by means of
you :
Presented by your voice and verse the
way
To take them clearest. Verily I was
wrong ;
And verily, many thinkers of this age,
Ay, many Christian teachers, half in
heaven,
Are wrong in just my sense, who
understood
Our natural world too insularly, as if
No spiritual counterpart completed it
Consummating its meaning, rounding
all
To justice and perfection, line by line,
Form by form, nothing single, nor
alone,—
The great below clenched by the great
above ;
Shade here authenticating substance
there ;
The body proving spirit, as the effect
The cause : we, meantime, being too
grossly apt
To hold the natural, as dogs a bone
(Though reason and nature beat us in
the face) ;

So obstinately, that we'll break our
teeth
Or ever we let go. For everywhere
We're too materialistic,—eating clay
(Like men of the west) instead of
Adam's corn
And Noah's wine ; clay by handfuls,
clay by lumps,
Until we're filled up to the throat
with clay,
And grow the grimy colour of the
ground
On which we are feeding. Ay, materi-
alist
The age's name is. God Himself,
with some,
Is apprehended as the bare result
Of what His hand materially has
made,
Expressed in such an algebraic sign,
Called God ;—that is, to put it other-
wise,
They add up nature to a naught of
God
And cross the quotient. There are
many, even,
Whose names are written in the
Christian church
To no dishonour,—diet still on mud,
And splash the altars with it. You
might think
The clay, Christ laid upon their eye-
lids when,
Still blind, He called them to the use
of sight,
Remained there to retard its exercise
With clogging incrustations. Close
to heaven,
They see, for mysteries, through the
open doors,
Vague puffs of smoke from pots of
earthenware ;
And fain would enter, when their
time shall come,
With quite a different body than St.
Paul
Has promised,—husk and chaff, the
whole barley-corn,
Or where's the resurrection ? "
" Thus it is,"
I sighed. And he resumed with
mournful face.
" Beginning so, and filling up with
clay
The wards of this great key, the
natural world,

And fumbling vainly therefore at the
 lock
 Of the spiritual,—we feel ourselves
 shut in
 With all the wild-beast roar of strug-
 gling life,
 The terrors and compunctions of our
 souls,
 As saints with lions,—we who are not
 saints,
 And have no heavenly lordship in our
 stare
 To awe them backward ! Ay, we are
 forced, so pent,
 To judge the whole too partially, . . .
 confound
 Conclusions. Is there any common
 phrase
 Significant, when the adverb's heard
 alone,
 The verb being absent, and the pro-
 noun out ?
 But we, distracted in the roar of life,
 Still insolently at God's adverb
 snatch,
 And bruit against Him that His
 thought is void,
 His meaning hopeless ;—cry, that
 everywhere
 The government is slipping from His
 hand,
 Unless some other Christ . . . say
 Romney Leigh . . .
 Come up, and toil and toil, and
 change the world,
 For which the First has proved in-
 adequate,
 However we talk bigly of His work
 And piously of His person. We blas-
 pheme
 At last, to finish that doxology,
 Despairing on the earth for which He
 died.”
 “So now,” I asked, “you have more
 hope of men ?”
 “I hope,” he answered : “I am come
 to think
 That God will have His work done, as
 you said,
 And that we need not be disturbed too
 much
 For Romney Leigh or others having
 failed
 With this or that quack nostrum,—
 recipes

For keeping summits by annulling
 depths,
 For learning wrestling with long
 lounging sleeves,
 And perfect heroism without a scratch.
 We fail,—what, then ? Aurora, if I
 smiled
 To see you, in your lovely morning-
 pride,
 Try on the poet's wreath which suits
 the noon,—
 (Sweet cousin, walls must get the
 weather-stain .
 Before they grow the ivy !) certainly
 I stood myself there worthier of con-
 tempt,
 Self-rated, in disastrous arrogance,
 As competent to sorrow for mankind
 And even their odds. A man may
 well despair,
 Who counts himself so needful to suc-
 cess.
 I failed. I throw the remedy back
 on God,
 And sit down here beside you, in good
 hope.”
 “And yet, take heed,” I answered,
 “lest we lean
 Too dangerously on the other side,
 And so fail twice. Be sure, no earn-
 est work
 Of any honest creature, howbeit weak,
 Imperfect, ill-adapted, fails so much,
 It is not gathered as a grain of sand
 To enlarge the sum of human action
 used
 For carrying out God's end. No
 creature works
 So ill, observe, that therefore he's
 cashiered.
 The honest earnest man must stand
 and work ;
 The woman also ; otherwise she drops
 At once below the dignity of man,
 Accepting serfdom. Free men freely
 work :
 Whoever fears God, fears to sit at
 ease.”
 He cried, “True. After Adam, work
 was curse ;
 The natural creature labours, sweats
 and frets.
 But, after Christ, work turns to
 privilege ;

And henceforth one with our hu-
manity,
The Six-day Worker, working still in
us,
Has called us freely to work on with
Him
In high companionship. So, happi-
est !
I count that Heaven itself is only
work
To a surer issue. Let us work, in-
deed,—
But, no more, work as Adam . . .
nor as Leigh
Erewhile, as if the only man on earth,
Responsible for all the thistles blown
And tigers couchant,—struggling in
amaze
Against disease and winter,—snarling
on
For ever, that the world's not para-
dise.
Oh cousin, let us be content, in work,
To do the thing we can, and not pre-
sume
To fret because it's little. 'Twill em-
ploy
Seven men, they say, to make a per-
fect pin :
Who makes the head, content to miss
the point,—
Who makes the point, agreed to leave
the join :
And if a man should cry, ' I want a
pin,
And I must make it straightway,
head and point,—
His wisdom is not worth the pin he
wants.
Seven men to a pin,—and not a man
too much !
Seven generations, haply, to this
world,
To right it visibly, a finger's breadth,
And mend its rents a little. Oh, to
storm
And say,—' This world here is in-
tolerable ;
I will not eat this corn, nor drink
this wine,
Nor love this woman, flinging her
my soul
Without a bond for't, as a lover
should,
Nor use the generous leave of hap-
piness,

As not too good for using gener-
ously '—
(Since virtue kindles at the touch of
joy.
Like a man's cheek laid on a woman's
hand ;
And God, Who knows it, looks for
quick returns
From joys) !—to stand and claim to
have a life
Beyond the bounds of the individua'
man,
And raze all personal cloisters of the
soul
To build up public stores and maga-
zines,
As if God's creatures otherwise were
lost,
The builder surely saved by any
means !
To think,—I have a pattern on my
nail,
And I will carve the world new after
it,
And solve so, these hard social ques-
tions—nay,
Impossible social questions,—since
their roots
Strike deep in Evil's own existence
here,
Which God permits because the ques-
tion's hard
To abolish evil nor attain free-will.
Ay, hard to God, but not to Romney
Leigh !
For Romney has a pattern on his nail
(Whatever may be lacking on the
Mount),
And not being over nice to separate
What's element from what's con-
vention, hastes
By line on line, to draw you out a
world,
Without your help indeed, unless you
take
His yoke upon you and will learn of
him,—
So much he has to teach ! so good a
world !
The same, the whole creation's
groaning for !
No rich nor poor, no gain nor loss nor
stint,
No pottage in it able to exclude
A brother's birthright, and no right
of birth,

The pottage,—both secured to every man;
And perfect virtue dealt out like the rest,

Gratuitously, with the soup at six,
To whoso does not seek it."

"Softly, sir,"

I interrupted,—“I had a cousin once
I held in reverence. If he strained
too wide,

It was not to take honour, but give
help;

The gesture was heroic. If his
hand

Accomplished nothing . . . (well, it
is not proved)

That empty hand thrown im-
potently out

Were sooner caught, I think, by One
in heaven,

Than many a hand that reaped a
harvest in

And keeps the scythe's glow on it.
Pray you, then,

For my sake merely, use less bitter-
ness

In speaking of my cousin."

"Ah," he said,

"Aurora! when the prophet beats
the ass,

The angel intercedes." He shook his
head—

"And yet to mean so well, and fail so
foul,

Expresses ne'er another beast than
man;

The antithesis is human. Hearken,
dear;

There's too much abstract willing,
purposing,

In this poor world. We talk by ag-
gregates,

And think by systems; and, being
used to face

Our evils in statistics, are inclined
To cap them with unreal remedies

Drawn out in haste on the other side
the slate."

"That's true," I answered, fain to
throw up thought.

And make a game of't; "Oh, we
generalise

Enough to please you. If we pray at
all,

We pray no longer for our daily bread,

But next centenary's harvests. If
we give,

Our cup of water is not tendered till
We lay down pipes and found a Com-
pany

With Branches. Ass or angel, 'tis the
same:

A woman cannot do the thing she
ought,

Which means whatever perfect thing
she can,

In life, in art, in science, but she fears
To let the perfect action take her
part

And rest there: she must prove what
she can do

Before she does it,—prate of woman's
rights,

Of woman's mission, woman's func-
tion, till

The men (who are prating, too, on
their side) cry,

'A woman's function plainly is . . .
to talk.'

Poor souls, they are very reasonably
vexed!

They cannot hear each other speak."

"And you,

An artist, judge so?"

"I, an artist,—yes,

Because, precisely, I'm an artist, sir,
And woman,—if another sate in sight,

I'd whisper,—Soft, my sister! not a
word!

By speaking we prove only we can
speak;

Which he, the man here, never
doubted. What

He doubts, is whether he can *do* the
thing

With decent grace, we've not yet
done at all:

Now, do it; bring your statue,—you
have room!

He'll see it even by the starlight here;
And if 'tis e'er so little like the god

Who looks out from the marble
silently

Along the track of his own shining
dart

Through the dusk of ages,—there's
no need to speak;

The universe shall henceforth speak
for you,

And witness, 'She who did this thing,
was born

To do it,—claims her license in her work,
 —And so with more works. Whoso cures the plague,
 Though twice a woman, shall be called a leech:
 Who rights a land's finances, is excused
 For touching coppers, though her hands be white,—
 But we, we talk!"
 "It is the age's mood,"
 He said; "we boast, and do not.
 We put up
 Hostelry signs where'er we lodge a day,—
 Some red colossal cow, with mighty paps
 A Cyclops' fingers could not strain to milk;
 Then bring out presently our saucer-full
 Of curds. We want more quiet in our works,
 More knowledge of the bounds in which we work;
 More knowledge that each individual man
 Remains an Adam to the general race,
 Constrained to see, like Adam, that he keep
 His personal state's condition honest,
 Or vain all thoughts of his to help the world,
 Which still must be developed from its one,
 If bettered in its many. We, indeed,
 Who think to lay it out new like a park,
 We take a work on us which is not man's;
 For God alone sits far enough above,
 To speculate so largely. None of us
 (Not Romney Leigh) is mad enough to say,
 'We'll have a grove of oaks upon that slope
 And sink the need of acorns'. Government,
 If veritable and lawful, is not given
 By imposition of the foreign hand,—
 Nor chosen from a pretty pattern-book
 Of some domestic idealogue, who sits

And coldly chooses empire, where as well
 He might republic. Genuine government
 Is but the expression of a nation, good
 Or less good,—even as all society,
 Howe'er unequal, monstrous, crazed,
 and cursed.
 Is but the expression of men's single lives,
 The loud sum of the silent units.
 What!
 We'd change the aggregate and yet retain
 Each separate figure? Whom do we cheat by that?
 Now, not even Romney."
 "Cousin, you are sad.
 Did all your social labour at Leigh Hall
 And elsewhere, come to nought then?"
 "It was nought,"
 He answered mildly. "There is room indeed,
 For statues still, in this large world of God's,
 But not for vacuums,—so I am not sad:
 Not sadder than is good for what I am.
 My vain phalanstery dissolved itself;
 My men and women of disordered lives,
 I brought in orderly to dine and sleep,
 Broke up those waxen masks I made them wear,
 With fierce contortions of the natural face;
 And cursed me for my tyrannous constraint
 In forcing crooked creatures to live straight;
 And set the country hounds upon my back
 To bite and tear me for my wicked deed
 Of trying to do good without the church
 Or even the squires, Aurora. Do you mind
 Your ancient neighbours? The great book-club teems
 With 'sketches,' 'summaries,' and 'last tracts' but twelve,
 On Socialistic troublers of close bonds

Betwixt the generous rich and grate-
 ful poor.
 The vicar preached from 'Revela-
 tion' (till
 The doctor woke) and found me with
 'The Frogs'
 On three successive Sundays ; ay, and
 stopped
 To weep a little (for he's getting old)
 That such perdition should o'ertake a
 man
 Of such fair acres,—in the parish, too!
 He printed his discourses 'by re-
 quest ;'
 And if your book shall sell as his did,
 then
 Your verses are less good than I sup-
 pose.
 The women of the neighbourhood sub-
 scribed,
 And sent me a copy bound in scarlet
 silk,
 Tooled edges, blazoned with the arms
 of Leigh :
 I own that touched me."
 "What, the pretty ones ?
 Poor Romney !"
 "Otherwise the effect was small.
 I had my windows broken once or
 twice
 By Liberal peasants, naturally in-
 censed
 At such a vexer of Arcadian peace,
 Who would not let men call their
 wives their own
 To kick like Britons,—and made ob-
 stacles
 When things went smoothly as a baby
 drugged,
 Toward freedom and starvation ;
 bringing down
 The wicked London tavern-thieves
 and drabs,
 To affront the blessed hillside drabs
 and thieves
 With mended morals, quotha,—fine
 new lives !—
 My windows paid for't. I was shot
 at, once,
 By an active poacher who had hit a
 harc
 From the other barrel, tired of springe-
 ing game
 So long upon my acres, undisturbed,
 And restless for the country's virtue,
 (yet

He missed me)—ay, and pelted very
 oft
 In riding through the village. 'There
 he goes,
 Who'd drive away our Christian
 gentlefolks,
 To catch us undefended in the trap
 He baits with poisonous cheese, and
 lock us up
 In that pernicious prison of Leigh
 Hall
 With all his murderers ! Give an-
 other name,
 And say Leigh, Hell, and burn it up
 with fire.'
 And so they did, at last, Aurora."
 "Did ?"
 "You never heard it, cousin ? Vin-
 cent's news
 Came stinted, then."
 "They did ? they burnt
 Leigh Hall ?"
 "You're sorry, dear Aurora ? Yes,
 indeed,
 They did it perfectly : a thorough
 work,
 And not a failure, this time. Let us
 grant
 'Tis somewhat easier, though, to
 burn a house
 Than build a system :—yet that's
 easy, too,
 In a dream. Books, pictures,—ay,
 the pictures ! what,
 You think your dear Vandykes would
 give them pause ?
 Our proud ancestral Leighs with
 those peaked beards,
 Or bosoms white as foam thrown up
 on rocks
 From the old-spent wave. Such
 calm defiant looks
 They flared up with ! now, never-
 more they'll twit
 The bones in the family-vault with
 ugly death.
 Not one was rescued, save the Lady
 Maud,
 Who threw you down, that morning
 you were born,
 The undeniable lineal mouth and
 chin,
 To wear for ever for her gracious sake ;
 For which good deed I saved her : the
 rest went :

And you, you're sorry, cousin. Well,
for me,
With all my phalansterians safely out
(Poor hearts, they helped the burners,
it was said,
And certainly a few clapped hands
and yelled),
The ruin did not hurt me as it might,—
As when for instance I was hurt one
day,
A certain letter being destroyed. In
fact,
To see the great house flare so . . .
oaken floors,
Our fathers made so fine with rushes
once,
Before our mothers furbished them
with trains,—
Carved wainscots, panelled walls, the
favourite slide
For draining off a martyr (or a
rogue),
The echoing galleries, half a half-mile
long,
And all the various stairs that took
you up
And took you down, and took you
round about
Upon their slippery darkness, recol-
lect,
All helping to keep up one blazing
jest;
The flames through all the casements
pushing forth,
Like red-hot devils crinkled into
snakes,
All signifying,—‘ Look you, Romney
Leigh,
We save the people from your sav-
ing, here,
Yet so as by fire ! we make a pretty
show
Besides,—and that's the best you've
ever done.’
—To see this, almost moved myself to
clap !
The ‘ vale et plaude ’ came, too, with
effect,
When in the roof fell, and the fire,
that paused,
Stunned momentarily beneath the
stroke of slates
And tumbling rafters, rose at once
and roared,
And wrapping the whole house
(which disappeared

In a mounting whirlwind of dilated
flame),
Blew upward, straight, its drift of
fiery chaff
In the face of Heaven . . . which
blanched, and ran up higher.”

“ Poor Romney ! ”

“ Sometimes when I dream,”
he said,
“ I hear the silence after ; ’twas so still.
For all those wild beasts, yelling,
cursing round,
Were suddenly silent, while you
counted five !
So silent, that you heard a young
bird fall
From the top-nest in the neighbouring
rookery
Through edging over-rashly toward
the light.

The old rooks had already fled too far,
To hear the screech they fled with,
though you saw
Some flying on still, like scatterings
of dead leaves
In autumn-gusts, seen dark against
the sky :
All flying,—ousted, like the House of
Leigh.”

“ Dear Romney ! ”

“ Evidently ’twould have been
A fine sight for a poet, sweet, like
you,
To make the verse blaze after. I my-
self,
Even I, felt something in the grand
old trees,
Which stood that moment like brute
Druid gods
Amazed upon the rim of ruin, where,
As into a blackened socket, the great
fire
Had dropped,—still throwing up
splinters now and then,
To show them grey with all their
centuries,
Left there to witness that on such a
day
The house went out.”

“ Ah ! ”
“ While you counted five
I seemed to feel a little like a Leigh,—
But then it passed, Aurora. A child
cried ;

And I had enough to think of what to do

With all those houseless wretches in the dark,

And ponder where they'd dance the next time, they

Who had burnt the viol."

"Did you think of that? Who burns his viol will not dance, I know,

To cymbals, Romney."

"O my sweet sad voice," He cried,—*"O voice that speaks and overcomes!*

The sun is silent, but Aurora speaks."

"Alas," I said; "I speak I know not what:

I'm back in childhood, thinking as a child,

A foolish fancy—will it make you smile?

I shall not from the window of my room

Catch sight of those old chimneys any more."

"No more," he answered. "If you pushed one day

Through all the green hills to our fathers' house,

You'd come upon a great charred circle where

The patient earth was singed an acre round;

With one stone-stair, symbolic of my life,

Ascending, winding, leading up to nought!

'Tis worth a poet's seeing. Will you go?"

I made no answer. Had I any right To weep with this man, that I dared to speak?

A woman stood between his soul and mine,

And waved us off from touching evermore

With those unclean white hands of hers. Enough.

We had burnt our viols and were silent.

So, The silence lengthened till it pressed. I spoke,

To breathe: "I think you were ill afterward."

"More ill," he answered, "had been scarcely ill.

I hoped this feeble fumbling at life's knot

Might end concisely,—but I failed to die,

As formerly I failed to live,—and thus Grew willing, having tried all other ways,

To try just God's. Humility's so good,

When pride's impossible. Mark us, how we make

Our virtues, cousin, from our worn-out sins,

Which smack of them from henceforth. Is it right,

For instance, to wed here, while you love there?

And yet because a man sins once, the sin

Cleaves to him, in necessity to sin; That if he sin not so, to damn himself,

He sins so, to damn others with himself:

And thus, to wed here, loving there, becomes

A duty. Virtue buds a dubious leaf Round mortal brows; your ivy's better, dear.

—Yet she, 'tis certain, is my very wife;

The very lamb left mangled by the wolves

Through my own bad shepherding: and could I choose

But take her on my shoulder past this stretch

Of rough, uneasy wilderness, poor lamb,

Poor child, poor child?—Aurora, my beloved,

I will not vex you any more to-night; But, having spoken what I came to say,

The rest shall please you. What she can, in me,—

Protection, tender liking, freedom, ease,

So, She shall have surely, liberally, for her

And hers, Aurora. Small amends they'll make

For hideous evils (which she had not known

Except by me) and for this imminent loss,

This forfeit presence of a gracious friend,

Which also she must forfeit for my sake,

Since . . . drop your hand in mine a moment, sweet,

We're parting !—Ah, my snowdrop, what a touch,

As if the wind had swept it off ! you grudge

Your gelid sweetness on my palm but so,

A moment ? angry, that I could not bear

You . . . speaking, breathing, living, side by side

With someone called my wife . . . and live, myself ?

Nay, be not cruel—you must understand !

Your lightest footfall on a floor of mine

Would shake the house, my lintel being uncrossed

'Gainst angels : henceforth it is night with me,

And so, henceforth, I put the shutters up ;

Auroras must not come to spoil my dark."

He smiled so feebly, with an empty hand

Stretched sideway from me,—as indeed he looked

To anyone but me to give him help,—

And, while the moon came suddenly out full,

The double-rose of our Italian moons,

Sufficient, plainly, for the heaven and earth

(The stars, struck dumb and washed away in dews

Of golden glory, and the mountains steeped

In divine languor), he, the man, appeared

So pale and patient, like the marble man

A sculptor puts his personal sadness in

To join his grandeur of ideal thought,—

As if his mallet struck me from my height

Of passionate indignation, I who had risen

Pale,—doubting, paused, . . . Was Romney mad indeed ?

Had all this wrong of heart made sick the brain ?

Then quiet, with a sort of tremulous pride,

"Go, cousin," I said coldly, "a farewell

Was sooner spoken 'twixt a pair of friends

In those old days, than seems to suit you now :

Howbeit since then, I've writ a book or two,

I'm somewhat dull still in the manly art

Of phrase and metaphor. Why, any man

Can carve a score of white Loves out of snow,

As Buonarotti down in Florence there,

And set them on the wall in some safe shade,

As safe, sir, as your marriage ! very good ;

Though if a woman took one from the ledge

To put it on the table by her flowers,

And let it mind her of a certain friend,

'Twould drop at once (so better), would not bear

Her nail-mark even, where she took it up

A little tenderly ; so best, I say :

For me, I would not touch so light a thing,

And risk to spoil it half an hour before

The sun shall shine to melt it : leave it there.

I'm plain at speech, direct in purpose : when

I speak, you'll take the meaning as it is,

And not allow for puckerings in the silks

By clever stitches. I'm a woman,
 sir,
 And use the woman's figures naturally,
 As you, the male license. So, I wish
 you well.
 I'm simply sorry for the griefs you've
 had—
 And not for your sake only, but man-
 kind's.
 This race is never grateful : from the
 first,
 One fills their cup at supper with pure
 wine,
 Which back they give at cross-time on
 a sponge,
 In bitter vinegar."

"If graterfuller,"
 He murmured,—“by so much less
 pitiable !
 God's self would never have come
 down to die,
 Could man have thanked Him for it.”
 “Happily
 ‘Tis patent that, whatever,” I re-
 sumed,
 “You suffered from this thanklessness
 of men,
 You sink no more than Moses' bul-
 rush-boat,
 When once relieved of Moses ; for
 you're light,
 You're light, my cousin ! which is
 well for you,
 And manly. For myself,—now mark
 me, sir,
 They burnt Leigh Hall ; but if, con-
 summated
 To devils, heightened beyond Luci-
 fers,
 They had burnt instead a star or two,
 of those
 We saw above there just a moment
 back,
 Before the moon abolished them,—
 destroyed
 And riddled them in ashes through a
 sieve
 On the head of the foundering uni-
 verse,—what then ?
 If you and I remained still you and I,
 It would not shift our places as mere
 friends,
 Nor render decent you should toss a
 phrase

Beyond the point of actual feeling !—
 nay,
 You shall not interrupt me : as you
 said,
 We're parting. Certainly, not once
 or twice,
 To-night you've mocked me some-
 what, or yourself ;
 And I, at least, have not deserved it
 so
 That I should meet it unsurprised.
 But now,
 Enough : we're parting . . . part-
 ing. Cousin Leigh,
 I wish you well through all the acts of
 life
 And life's relations, wedlock, not the
 least ;
 And it shall ‘please me,’ in your
 words, to know
 You yield your wife, protection, free-
 dom, ease,
 And very tender liking. May you
 live
 So happy with her, Romney, that
 your friends
 May praise her for it. Meantime,
 some of us
 Are wholly dull in keeping ignorant
 Of what she has suffered by you, and
 what debt
 Of sorrow your rich love sits down to
 pay :
 But if 'tis sweet for love to pay its
 debt,
 'Tis sweeter still for love to give its
 gift ;
 And you, be liberal in the sweeter
 way,—
 You can, I think. At least, as
 touches me,
 You owe her, cousin Romney, no
 amends ;
 She is not used to hold my gown so
 fast,
 You need entreat her now to let it go ;
 The lady never was a friend of mine,
 Nor capable,—I thought you knew as
 much,—
 Of losing for your sake so poor a prize
 As such a worthless friendship. Be
 content,
 Good cousin, therefore, both for her
 and you !
 I'll never spoil your dark, nor dull
 your noon,

Nor vex you when you're merry, nor
when you rest :

You shall not need to put a shutter up
To keep out this Aurora. Ah, your
north

Can make Auroras which vex no-
body,

Scarce known from evenings ! also, let
me say,

My larks fly higher than some win-
dows. Right ;

You've read your Leighs. Indeed
'twould shake a house,

If such as I came in with outstretched
hand,

Still warm and thrilling from the
clasp of one . . .

Of one we know . . . to acknow-
ledge, palm to palm,

As mistress there . . . the Lady Wal-
demar."

" Now God be with us " . . . with a
sudden clash

Of voice he interrupted—" what
name's that ?

You spoke a name, Aurora."

" Pardon me ;

I would that, Romney, I could name
your wife

Nor wound you, yet be worthy."

" Are we mad ? "

He echoed—" wife ! mine ! Lady
Waldemar !

I think you said my wife." He
sprang to his feet,

And threw his noble head back to-
ward the moon

As one who swims against a stormy
sea,

And laughed with such a helpless,
hopeless scorn,

I stood and trembled.

" May God judge me so,"

He said at last,— " I came convicted
here,

And humbled sorely if not enough. I
came,

Because this woman from her crystal
soul

Had shown me something which a
man calls light :

Because too, formerly, I sinned by
her

As, then and ever since, I have, by
God,

Through arrogance of nature,—
though I loved . . .

Whom best, I need not say . . .
since that is writ

Too plainly in the book of my mis-
deeds ;

And thus I came here to abase myself,
And fasten, kneeling, on her regent
brows

A garland which I startled thence one
day

Of her beautiful June-youth. But
here again

I'm baffled !—fail in my abasement
as

My aggrandisement : there's no room
left for me,

At any woman's foot, who miscon-
ceives

My nature, purpose, possible actions.
What !

Are you the Aurora who made large
my dreams

To frame your greatness ? you con-
ceive so small ?

You stand so less than woman,
through being more,

And lose your natural instinct, like a
beast,

Through intellectual culture ? since
indeed

I do not think that any common she
Would dare adopt such fancy-for-
geries

For the legible life-signature of such
As I, with all my blots : with all my
blots !

At last then, peerless cousin, we are
peers—

At last we're even. Ah, you've left
your height ;

And here upon my level we take
hands,

And here I reach you to forgive you,
sweet,

And that's a fall, Aurora. Long ago
You seldom understood me,—but,

before,

I could not blame you. Then, you
only seemed

So high above, you could not see be-
low ;

But now I breathe,—but now I par-
don !—nay,

We're parting. Dearest, men have
burnt my house,

Maligned my motives,—but not one, I swear,
Has wronged my soul as this Aurora has,
Who called the Lady Waldemar my wife."

"Not married to her! yet you said" . . .

"Again?"

Nay, read the lines" (he held a letter out)

"She sent you through me."

By the moonlight there,
I tore the meaning out with passionate haste
Much rather than I read it. Thus it ran.

NINTH BOOK

Even thus. I pause to write it out at length,

The letter of the Lady Waldemar.—

"I prayed your cousin Leigh to take you this,

He says he'll do it. After years of love,

Or what is called so,—when a woman frets

And fools upon one string of a man's name,

And fingers it for ever till it breaks,—

He may perhaps do for her such a thing,

And she accept it without detriment
Although she should not love him any more.

And I, who do not love him, nor love you,

Nor you, Aurora,—choose you shall repent

Your most ungracious letter, and confess,

Constrained by his convictions (he's convinced),

You've wronged me foully. Are you made so ill,

You woman—to impute such ill to me?

We both had mothers,—lay in their bosom once.

Why, after all, I thank you, Aurora Leigh,

For proving to myself that there are things

I would not do . . . not for my life . . . nor him . . .

Though something I have somewhat overdone,—

For instance, when I went to see the gods

One morning on Olympus, with a step

That shook the thunder from a certain cloud,

Committing myself vilely. Could I think,

The Muse I pulled my heart out from my breast

To soften, had herself a sort of heart,
And loved my mortal? He, at least, loved her;

I heard him say so; 'twas my recompense,

When, watching at his bedside fourteen days,

He broke out ever like a flame at whiles

Between the heats of fever . . . 'Is it thou?

Breathe closer, sweetest mouth! and when at last

The fever gone, the wasted face extinct

As if it irked him much to know me there,

He said, 'Twas kind, 'twas good, 'twas womanly'

(And fifty praises to excuse one love),
'But was the picture safe he had ventured for?'

And then, half wandering . . . 'I have loved her well,

Although she could not love me.—' Say instead,

I answered, 'that she loves you.'— 'Twas my turn

To rave (I would have married him so changed,

Although the world had jeered me properly

For taking up with Cupid at his worst,

The silver quiver worn off on his hair).
'No, no,' he murmured, 'no, she loves me not;

Aurora Leigh does better: bring her book

And read it softly, Lady Waldemar,

Until I thank your friendship more for that,

Than even for harder service.' So I
 read
 Your book, Aurora, for an hour, that
 day :
 I kept its pauses, marked its emphasis;
 My voice, empaled upon rhyme's
 golden hooks,
 Not once would writhe, nor quiver,
 nor revolt ;
 I read on calmly,—calmly shut it up,
 Observing, ' There's some merit in the
 book.
 And yet the merit in't is thrown
 away
 As chances still with women, if we
 write
 Or write not : we want string to tie
 our flowers,
 So drop them as we walk, which
 serves to show
 The way we went. Good morning,
 Mister Leigh ;
 You'll find another reader the next
 time.
 A woman who does better than to
 love,
 I hate : she will do nothing very
 well : *
 Male poets are preferable, tiring less
 And teaching more.' I triumphed
 o'er you both,
 And left him.
 " When I saw him afterward,
 I had read your shameful letter, and
 my heart.
 He came with health recovered,
 strong though pale,
 Lord Howe and he, a courteous pair
 of friends,
 To say what men dare say to women,
 when
 Their debtors. But I stopped them
 with a word ;
 And proved I had never trodden such
 a road,
 To carry so much dirt upon my shoe.
 Then, putting into it something of
 disdain,
 I asked forsooth his pardon, and my
 own,
 For having done no better than to
 love,
 And that, not wisely,—though 'twas
 long ago,
 And though 'twas altered perfectly
 since then,

I told him, as I tell you now, Miss
 Leigh,
 And proved I took some trouble for
 his sake
 (Because I knew he did not love the
 girl)
 To spoil my hands with working in
 the stream
 Of that poor bubbling nature,—till
 she went,
 Consigned to one I trusted, my own
 maid,
 Who once had lived full five months
 in my house
 (Dressed hair superbly), with a lavish
 purse
 To carry to Australia where she had
 left
 A husband, said she. If the creature
 lied,
 The mission failed, we all do fail and
 lie
 More or less—and I'm sorry—which
 is all
 Expected from us when we fail the
 most,
 And go to church to own it. What I
 meant,
 Was just the best for him, and me,
 and her . . .
 Best even for Marian !—I am sorry
 for't,
 And very sorry. Yet my creature
 said
 She saw her stop to speak in Oxford
 Street
 To one . . . no matter ! I had
 sooner cut
 My hand off (though 'twere kissed
 the hour before,
 And promised a pearl troth-ring for
 the next)
 Than crush her silly head with so
 much wrong.
 Poor child ! I would have mended it
 with gold,
 Until it gleamed like St. Sophia's
 dome
 When all the faithful troop to morn-
 ing prayer :
 But he, he nipped the bud of such a
 thought
 With that cold Leigh look which I
 fancied once,
 And broke in, ' Henceforth she was
 called his wife.

His wife required no succour : he
 was bound
 To Florence, to resume this broken
 bond :
 Enough so. Both were happy, he
 and Howe,
 To acquit me of the heaviest charge
 of all—'
 At which I shot my tongue against
 my fly
 And struck him ; ' Would he carry,—
 he was just,—
 A letter from me to Aurora Leigh,
 And ratify from his authentic
 mouth
 My answer to her accusation ? '—
 ' Yes,
 If such a letter were prepared in
 time.'
 —He's just, your cousin,—ay, abhor-
 rently.
 He'd wash his hands in blood, to
 keep them clean.
 And so, cold, courteous, a mere gentle-
 man,
 He bowed, we parted.
 " Parted. Face no more,
 Voice no more, love no more ! wiped
 wholly out
 Like some ill scholar's scrawl from
 heart and slate,—
 Ay, spit on and so wiped out utterly
 By some coarse scholar ! I have been
 too coarse,
 Too human. Have we business, in
 our rank,
 With blood i' the veins ? I will have
 henceforth none ;
 Not even to keep the colour at my lip.
 A rose is pink and pretty without
 blood ;
 Why not a woman ? When we've
 played in vain
 The game, to adore,—we have
 resources still,
 And can play on at leisure, being
 adored :
 Here's Smith already swearing at my
 feet
 That I'm the typic She. Away with
 Smith !—
 Smith smacks of Leigh,—and, hence-
 forth, I'll admit
 No Socialist within three crinolines,
 To live and have his being. But
 for you,

Though insolent your letter and
 absurd,
 And though I hate you frankly,—
 take my Smith !
 For when you have seen this famous
 marriage tied,
 A most unspotted Erle to a noble
 Leigh
 (His love astray on one he should not
 love),
 Howbeit you should not want his
 love, beware,
 You'll want some comfort. So I
 leave you Smith ;
 Take Smith !—he talks Leigh's sub-
 jects, somewhat worse ;
 Adopts a thought of Leigh's, and
 dwindles it ;
 Goes leagues beyond, to be no inch
 behind ;
 Will mind you of him, as a shoe-
 string may,
 Of a man : and women, when they
 are made like you,
 Grow tender to a shoe-string, foot-
 print even,
 Adore averted shoulders in a glass,
 And memories of what, present once,
 was loathed.
 And yet, you loathed not Romney,—
 though you've played
 At ' fox and goose ' about him with
 your soul :
 Pass over fox, you rub out fox,—
 ignore
 A feeling, you eradicate it,—the act's
 identical.
 " I wish you joy, Miss Leigh.
 You've made a happy marriage for
 your friend ;
 And all the honour, well-assorted
 love,
 Derives from you who love him, whom
 he loves !
 You need not wish *me* joy to think of
 it,
 I have so much. Observe, Aurora
 Leigh ;
 Your droop of eyelid is the same as
 his,
 And, but for you, I might have won
 his love,
 And, to you, I have shown my naked
 heart,—
 For which three things I hate, hate,
 hate you. Hush,

Suppose a fourth!—I cannot choose
but think

That, with him, I were virtuouser
than you

Without him: so I hate you from
this gulf

And hollow of my soul, which opens
out

To what, except for you, had been my
heaven,

And is instead, a place to curse by!
Love."

An active kind of curse. I stood
there cursed—

Confounded. I had seized and
caught the sense

Of the letter with its twenty stinging
snakes,

In a moment's sweep of eyesight, and
I stood

Dazed.—"Ah!—not married."

"You mistake," he said;
"I'm married. Is not Marian Erle
my wife?"

As God sees things, I have a wife and
child;

And I, as I'm a man who honours
God,

Am here to claim them as my child
and wife."

I felt it hard to breathe, much less to
speak.

Nor word of mine was needed. Some
one else

Was there for answering. "Rom-
ney," she began,

"My great good angel, Romney."

Then at first,
I knew that Marian Erle was beauti-
ful.

She stood there, still and pallid as a
saint,

Dilated, like a saint in ecstasy,
As if the floating moonshine inter-
posed

Betwixt her foot and the earth, and
raised her up

To float upon it. "I had left my
child,

Who sleeps," she said, "and, having
drawn this way,

I heard you speaking, . . . friend!—
Confirm me now.

You take this Marian, such as wicked
men

Have made her, for your honourable
wife?"

The thrilling, solemn, proud, pathetic
voice.

He stretched his arms out toward the
thrilling voice,

As if to draw it on to his embrace.

—"I take her as God made her, and
as men

Must fail to unmake her, for my
honoured wife."

She never raised her eyes, nor took a
step,

But stood there in her place, and
spoke again.

—"You take this Marian's child,
which is her shame

In sight of men and women, for your
child,

Of whom you will not ever feel
ashamed?"

The thrilling, tender, proud, pathetic
voice.

He stepped on toward it, still with
outstretched arms,

As if to quench upon his breast that
voice.

—"May God so father me, as I do
him,

And so forsake me as I let him feel
He's orphaned haply. Here I take

the child
To share my cup, to slumber on my

knee,
To play his loudest gambol at my

foot,
To hold my finger in the public ways,

Till none shall need inquire, 'Whose
child is this?'

The gesture saying so tenderly, 'My
own.'"

She stood a moment silent in her
place;

Then, turning toward me, very slow
and cold—

—"And you,—what say you?—
will you blame me much,

If, careful for that outcast child of
mine,

I catch this hand that's stretched to
me and him,

Nor dare to leave him friendless in
the world

Where men have stoned me ? Have
 I not the right
 To take so mere an aftermath from
 life,
 Else found so wholly bare ? Or is it
 wrong
 To let your cousin, for a generous
 bent,
 Put out his ungloved fingers among
 briars
 To set a tumbling bird's-nest some-
 what straight ?
 You will not tell him, though we're
 innocent
 We are not harmless ? . . . and that
 both our harms
 Will stick to his good smooth noble
 life like burrs,
 Never to drop off though you shake
 the cloak ?
 You've been my friend : you will not
 now be his ?
 You've known him, that he's worthy
 of a friend ;
 And you're his cousin, lady, after
 all,
 And therefore more than free to take
 his part,
 Explaining, since the nest is surely
 spoilt,
 And Marian what you know her,—
 though a wife,
 The world would hardly understand
 her case
 Of being just hurt and honest ; while
 for him,
 'Twould ever twit him with his bas-
 tard child
 And married harlot. Speak, while
 yet there's time :
 You would not stand and let a good
 man's dog
 Turn round and rend him, because
 his, and reared
 Of a generous breed,—and will you
 let his act,
 Because it's generous ? Speak. I'm
 bound to you,
 And I'll be bound by only you, in
 this."

The thrilling, solemn voice, so pas-
 sionless,
 Sustained, yet low, without a rise
 or fall,
 As one who had authority to speak,

And not as Marian.

I looked up to feel
 If God stood near me, and beheld
 His heaven
 As blue as Aaron's priestly robe
 appeared
 To Aaron when he took it off to die.
 And then I spoke—"Accept the gift,
 I say,
 My sister Marian, and be satisfied.
 The hand that gives has still a soul
 behind
 Which will not let it quail for having
 given,
 Though foolish worldlings talk they
 know not what,
 Of what they know not. Romney's
 strong enough
 For this : do you be strong to know
 he's strong :
 He stands on Right's side ; never
 flinch for him,
 As if he stood on the other. You'll be
 bound
 By me ? I am a woman of repute ;
 No fly-blow gossip ever specked my
 life ;
 My name is clean and open as this
 hand,
 Whose glove there's not a man dares
 blab about,
 As if he had touched it freely :—
 here's my hand
 To clasp your hand, my Marian,
 owned as pure !
 As pure,—as I'm a woman and a
 Leigh !—
 And, as I'm both, I'll witness to the
 world
 That Romney Leigh is honoured in
 his choice,
 Who chooses Marian for his honoured
 wife."

Her broad wild woodland eyes shot
 out a light ;
 Her smile was wonderful for rapture.
 "Thanks,
 My great Aurora." Forward then
 she sprang,
 And dropping her impassioned spaniel
 head
 With all its brown abandonment of
 curls
 On Romney's feet, we heard the
 kisses drawn

Through sobs upon the foot, upon the ground—

“O Romney! O my angel! O unchanged,

Though, since we've parted, I have past the grave!

But Death itself could only better *thee*,

Not change thee!—*Thee* I do not thank at all:

I but thank God Who made thee what thou art,

So wholly Godlike.”

When he tried in vain
To raise her to his embrace, escaping thence

As any leaping fawn from a huntsman's grasp,

She bounded off and 'lighted beyond reach,

Before him, with a staglike majesty
Of soft, serene defiance,—as she knew

He could not touch her, so was tolerant

He had cared to try. She stood there with her great

Drowned eyes, and dripping cheeks, and strange sweet smile

That lived through all, as if one held a light

Across a waste of waters,—shook her head

To keep some thoughts down deeper in her soul,—

Then, white and tranquil as a summer-cloud

Which, having rained itself to a tardy peace,

Stands still in heaven as if it ruled the day,

Spoke out again—“Although, my generous friend,

Since last we met and parted, you're unchanged,

And, having promised faith to Marian Erle,

Maintain it, as she were not changed at all;

And though that's worthy, though that's full of balm

To any conscious spirit of a girl
Who once has loved you as I loved you once,—

Yet still it will not make her . . . if she's dead,

And gone away where none can give or take

In marriage,—able to revive, return
And wed you,—will it, Romney?

Here's the point;
O friend, we'll see it plainer: you and I

Must never, never, never join hands so.

Nay, let me say it,—for I said it first
To God, and placed it, rounded to an oath,

Far, far above the moon there, at His feet,

As surely as I wept just now at yours,—

We never, never, never join hands so.
And now, be patient with me; do not think

I'm speaking from a false humility.
The truth is, I am grown so proud with grief,

And He has said so often through His nights

And through His mornings, ‘Weep a little still.

Thou foolish Marian, because women must,

But do not blush at all except for sin,’—

That I, who felt myself unworthy once

Of virtuous Romney and his high-born race,

Have come to learn . . . a woman, poor or rich,

Despised or honoured, is a human soul;

And what her soul is,—that, she is herself,

Although she should be spit upon of men,

As is the pavement of the churches here,

Still good enough to pray in. And, being chaste

And honest, and inclined to do the right,

And love the truth, and live my life out green

And smooth beneath his steps, I should not fear

To make him, thus, a less uneasy time

Than many a happier woman. Very proud

You see me. Pardon, that I set a
 trap
 To hear a confirmation in your
 voice . . .
 Both yours and yours. It is so good
 to know
 'Twas really God Who said the same
 before :
 For thus it is in heaven, that first
 God speaks,
 And then His angels. Oh, it does me
 good,
 It wipes me clean and sweet from
 devil's dirt,
 That Romney Leigh should think
 me worthy still
 Of being his true and honourable wife !
 Henceforth I need not say, on leaving
 earth,
 I had no glory in it. For the rest,
 The reason's ready (master, angel,
 friend,
 Be patient with me) wherefore you
 and I
 Can never, never, never join hands so.
 I know you'll not be angry like a
 man
 (For *you* are none) when I shall tell
 the truth,—
 Which is, I do not love you, Romney
 Leigh,
 I do not love you. Ah well ! catch
 my hands,
 Miss Leigh, and burn into my eyes
 with yours,—
 I swear I do not love him. Did I
 once ?
 'Tis said that women have been
 bruised to death,
 And yet, if once they loved, that love
 of theirs
 Could never be drained out with all
 their blood :
 I've heard such things and pondered,
 Did I indeed
 Love once ? or did I only worship ?
 Yes,
 Perhaps, O friend, I set you up so
 high
 Above all actual good or hope of good,
 Or fear of evil, all that could be mine,
 I haply set you above love itself,
 And out of reach of these poor woman's
 arms,
 Angelic Romney. What was in my
 thought ?

To be your slave, your help, your
 toy, your tool.
 To be your love . . . I never thought
 of that.
 To give you love . . . still less. I
 gave you love ?
 I think I did not give you anything ;
 I was but only yours,—upon my
 knees,
 All yours, in soul and body, in head
 and heart,—
 A creature you had taken from the
 ground,
 Still crumbling through your fingers
 to your feet
 To join the dust she came from.
 Did I love,
 Or did I worship ? judge, Aurora
 Leigh !
 But, if indeed I loved, 'twas long ago,—
 So long ! before the sun and moon
 were made,
 Before the hells were open,—ah,
 before
 I heard my child cry in the desert
 night,
 And knew he had no father. It may
 be,
 I'm not as strong as other women are,
 Who, torn and crushed, are not un-
 done from love.
 It may be, I am colder than the dead,
 Who, being dead, love always. But
 for me
 Once killed . . . this ghost of Marian
 loves no more,
 No more . . . except the child ! . . .
 no more at all.
 I told your cousin, sir, that I was
 dead ;
 And now, she thinks I'll get up from
 my grave,
 And wear my chin-cloth for a wed-
 ding-veil,
 And glide along the churchyard like a
 bride,
 While all the dead keep whispering
 through the withes,
 ' You would be better in your place
 with us,
 You pitiful corruption ! ' At the
 thought,
 The damps break out on me like
 leprosy,
 Although I'm clean. Ay, clean as
 Marian Erle :

As Marian Leigh, I know, I were not
clean :
I have not so much life that I should
love,
... Except the child. Ah God ! I
could not bear
To see my darling on a good man's
knees,
And know by such a look, or such a
sigh,
Or such a silence, that he thought
sometimes,
' This child was fathered by some
cursed wretch ' . . .
For, Romney,—angels are less tender-
wise
Than God and mothers: even *you*
would think
What *we* think never. He is ours, the
child ;
And we would sooner vex a soul in
heaven
By coupling with it the dead body's
thought,
It left behind it in a last month's
grave,
Than, in my child, see other than . . .
my child.
We only, never call him father-
less
Who has God and his mother. O my
babe,
My pretty, pretty blossom, an ill-
wind
Once blew upon my breast ! can any
think
I'd have another,—one called hap-
pier,
A fathered child, with father's love
and race
That's worn as bold and open as a
smile,
To vex my darling when he's asked
his name
And has no answer ? What ! a
happier child
Than mine, my best,—who laughed
so loud to-night
He could not sleep for pastime ? Nay,
I swear
By life and love, that, if I lived like
some,
And loved like . . . *some* . . . ay,
loved you, Romney Leigh,
As some love (eyes that have wept
so much see clear),

I've room for no more children in my
arms ;
My kisses are all melted on one mouth ;
I would not push my darling to a
stool
To dandle babies. Here's a hand,
shall keep
For ever clean without a marriage-
ring,
To tend my boy, until he cease to need
One steadying finger of it, and desert
(Not miss) his mother's lap, to sit with
men.
And when I miss him (not he me) I'll
come
And say, ' Now give me some of
Romney's work,
To help your outcast orphans of the
world,
And comfort grief with grief.' For
you, meantime,
Most noble Romney, wed a noble
wife,
And open on each other your great
souls,—
I need not farther bless you. If I
dared
But strain and touch her in her
upper sphere,
And say, ' Come down to Romney—
pay my debt !'
I should be joyful with the stream of
joy
Sent through me. But the moon is
in my face . . .
I dare not,—though I guess the name
he loves ;
I'm learned with my studies of old
days,
Remembering how he crushed his
under-lip
When some one came and spoke, or
did not come :
Aurora, I could touch her with my
hand,
And fly, because I dare not."
She was gone.
He smiled so sternly that I spoke in
haste.
" Forgive her—she sees clearly fo-
herself :
Her instinct's holy."
" I forgive ? " he said,
" I only marvel how she sees so sure,
While others " . . . there he paused,
—then hoarse, abrupt,—

"Aurora! you forgive us, her and me?
 For her, the thing she sees, poor loyal
 child,
 If once corrected by the thing I know,
 Had been unspoken; since she loves
 you well,
 Has leave to love you:—while for
 me, alas,
 If once or twice I let my heart escape
 This night . . . remember, where
 hearts slip and fall
 They break beside: we're parting,—
 parting,—ah,
 You do not love, that you should
 surely know
 What that word means. Forgive,
 be tolerant;
 It had not been, but that I felt myself
 So safe in impuissance and despair,
 I could not hurt you though I tossed
 my arms
 And sighed my soul out. The
 most utter wretch
 Will choose his postures when he
 comes to die,
 However in the presence of a queen;
 And you'll forgive me some un-
 seemly spasms
 Which meant no more than dying.
 Do you think
 I had ever come here in my perfect
 mind,
 Unless I had come here, in my settled
 mind,
 Bound Marian's, bound to keep the
 bond, and give
 My name, my house, my hand, the
 things I could,
 To Marian? For even I could give
 as much;
 Even I, affronting her exalted soul
 By a supposition that she wanted
 these,
 Could act the husband's coat and hat
 set up
 To creak i' the wind and drive the
 world-crows off
 From pecking in her garden. Straw
 can fill
 A hole to keep out vermin. Now,
 at last,
 I own heaven's angels round her life
 suffice
 To fight the rats of our society,
 Without this Romney: I can see it at
 last;

And here is ended my pretension
 which
 The most pretended. Over-proud
 of course,
 Even so!—but not so stupid . . .
 blind . . . that I,
 Whom thus the great Taskmaster of
 the world
 Has set to meditate mistaken work,
 My dreary face against a dim blank
 wall
 Throughout man's natural lifetime,
 —could pretend
 Or wish . . . O love, I have loved
 you! O my soul,
 I have lost you!—but I swear by all
 yourself,
 And all you might have been to me
 these years,
 If that June-morning had not failed
 my hope,—
 I'm not so bestial, to regret that day
 This night,—this night, which still to
 you is fair;
 Nay, not so blind, Aurora. I attest
 Those stars above us, which I cannot
 see . . ."
 "You cannot" . . .
 "That if Heaven itself should
 stoop,
 Remix the lots, and give me another
 chance,
 I'd say, 'No other!'—I'd record my
 blank.
 Aurora never should be wife of mine."
 "Not see the stars?"
 "'Tis worse still, not to see
 To find your hand, although we're
 parting, dear.
 A moment let me hold it, ere we part;
 And understand my last words—
 these, at last!
 I would not have you thinking, when
 I'm gone,
 That Romney dared to hanker for
 your love,
 In thought or vision, if attainable
 (Which certainly for me it never
 was),
 And wish to use it for a dog to-day,
 To help the blind man stumbling,
 God forbid!
 And now I know He held you in His
 palm,

And kept you open-eyed to all my faults,
 To save you at last from such a dreary end.
 Believe me, dear, that if I had known, like Him,
 What loss was coming on me, I had done
 As well in this as He has.—Farewell, you,
 Who are still my light,—farewell!
 How late it is:
 I know that, now: you've been too patient, sweet.
 I will but blow my whistle toward the lane,
 And some one comes . . . the same who brought me here.
 Get in—Good-night.”
 “A moment. Heavenly Christ! A moment. Speak once, Romney. 'Tis not true.
 I hold your hands, I look into your face—
 You see me?”
 “No more than the blessed stars. Be blessed too, Aurora. Ah, my sweet,
 You tremble. Tender-hearted! Do you mind
 Of yore, dear, how you used to cheat old John,
 And let the mice out sily from his traps,
 Until he marvelled at the soul in mice
 Which took the cheese and left the snare? The same
 Dear soft heart always! 'Twas for this, I grieved
 Howe's letter never reached you. Ah, you had heard
 Of illness,—not the issue . . . not the extent:
 My life long sick with tossings up and down;
 The sudden revulsion in the blazing house,—
 The strain and struggle both of body and soul,
 Which left fire running in my veins, for blood:
 Scarce lacked that thunderbolt of the falling beam,
 Which nicked me on the forehead as I passed

The gallery-door with a burden. Say heaven's bolt,
 Not William Erle's; not Marian's father's; tramp
 And poacher, whom I found for what he was,
 And, eager for her sake to rescue him, Forth swept from the open highway of the world,
 Road-dust and all,—till, like a wood-land boar
 Most naturally unwilling to be tamed,
 He notched me with his tooth. But not a word
 To Marian! and I do not think, besides,
 He turned the tilting of the beam my way,—
 And if he laughed, as many swear, poor wretch,
 Nor he nor I supposed the hurt so deep.
 We'll hope his next laugh may be merrier,
 In a better cause.”
 “Blind, Romney?”
 “Ah, my friend,
 You'll learn to say it in a cheerful voice.
 I, too, at first desponded. To be blind,
 Turned out of nature, mulcted as a man,
 Refused the daily largesse of the sun
 To humble creatures! When the fever's heat
 Dropped from me, as the flame did from my house,
 And left me ruined like it, stripped of all
 The hues and shapes of aspectable life,
 A mere bare blind stone in the blaze of day,
 A man, upon the outside of the earth, As dark as ten feet under, in the grave,—
 Why that seemed hard.”
 “No hope?”
 “A tear! you weep,
 Divine Aurora? tears upon my hand!
 I've seen you weeping for a mouse, a bird,—
 But, weep for me, Aurora? Yes, there's hope.

Not hope of sight,—I could be learned,
 dear,
 And tell you in what Greek and Latin
 name
 The visual nerve is withered to the
 root,
 Though the outer eyes appear indif-
 ferent,
 Unspotted in their crystals. But
 there's hope.
 The spirit, from behind this de-
 throned sense,
 Sees, waits in patience, till the walls
 break up
 From which the bas-relief and fresco
 have dropt :
 There's hope. The man here, once
 so arrogant
 And restless, so ambitious, for his part,
 Of dealing with statistically packed
 Disorders (from a pattern on his
 nail),
 And packing such things quite an-
 other way,—
 Is now contented. From his personal
 loss
 He has come to hope for others when
 they lose,
 And wear a gladder faith in what we
 gain . . .
 Through bitter experience, compensa-
 tion sweet,
 Like that tear, sweetest. I am quiet
 now,—
 As tender surely for the suffering
 world,
 But quiet,—sitting at the wall to
 learn,
 Content, henceforth, to do the thing I
 can :
 For, though as powerless, said I, as a
 stone,
 A stone can still give shelter to a
 worm,
 And it is worth while being a stone for
 that :
 There's hope, Aurora."
 "Is there hope for me ?
 For me ?—and is there room beneath
 the stone
 For such a worm ?—And if I came
 and said . . .
 What all this weeping scarce will let
 me say,
 And yet what women cannot say at
 all,

But weeping bitterly . . . (the pride
 keeps up,
 Until the heart breaks under it) . . .
 I love,—
 I love you, Romney" . . .
 "Silence!" he exclaimed.
 "A woman's pity sometimes makes
 her mad.
 A man's distraction must not cheat
 his soul
 To take advantage of it. Yet, 'tis
 hard—
 Farewell, Aurora."
 "But I love you, sir ;
 And when a woman says she loves a
 man,
 The man must hear her, though he
 love her not,
 Which . . . hush ! . . . he has leave
 to answer in his turn ;
 She will not surely blame him. As
 for me,
 You call it pity,—think I'm gener-
 ous ?
 'Twere somewhat easier, for a woman
 proud
 As I am, and I'm very vilely proud,
 To let it pass as such, and press on
 you
 Love born of pity,—seeing that
 excellent loves
 Are born so, often, nor the quicklier
 die,—
 And this would set me higher by the
 head
 Than now I stand. No matter : let
 the truth
 Stand high ; Aurora must be humble :
 no,
 My love's not pity merely. Obviously
 I'm not a generous woman, never
 was,
 Or else, of old, I had not looked so
 near
 To weights and measures, grudging
 you the power
 To give, as first I scorned your power
 to judge
 For me, Aurora : I would have no
 gifts
 Forsooth, but God's,—and I would
 use *them*, too,
 According to my pleasure and my
 choice,
 As He and I were equals,—you, be-
 low,

Excluded from that level of inter- change	Refused to warm itself in any sun
Admitting benefaction. You were wrong	Till such was <i>in leone</i> : I must fret Forsooth, because the month was only May ;
In much ? you said so. I was wrong in most.	Be faithless of the kind of proffered love,
Oh, most ! You only thought to rescue men	And captious, lest it miss my dig- nity,
By half-means, half-way, seeing half their wants,	And scornful, that my lover sought a wife
While thinking nothing of your per- sonal gain.	To use . . . to use ! O Romney, O my love,
But I who saw the human nature broad,	I am changed since then, changed wholly,—for indeed,
At both sides, comprehending, too, the soul's,	If now you'd stoop so low to take my love,
And all the high necessities of Art,	And use it roughly, without stint or spare,
Betrayed the thing I saw, and wronged my own life	As men use common things with more behind
For which I pleaded. Passioned to exalt	(And, in this, ever would be more behind),
The artist's instinct in me at the cost Of putting down the woman's,—I for- got	To any mean and ordinary end,— The joy would set me like a star in heaven,
No perfect artist is developed here From any imperfect woman. Flower from root,	So high up, I should shine because of height
And spiritual from natural, grade by grade	And not of virtue. Yet in one re- spect,
In all our life. A handful of the earth	Just one, beloved, I am in no wise changed :
To make God's image ! the despised poor earth,	I love you, loved you . . . loved you first and last,
The healthy odorous earth,—I missed, with it,	And love you on for ever. Now I know
The divine Breath that blows the nostrils out	I loved you always, Romney. She who died
To ineffable inflatus : ay, the breath Which love is. Art is much, but love is more.	Knew that, and said so ; Lady Walde- mar
O Art, my Art, thou'rt much, but Love is more !	Knows that ; . . . and Marian : I had known the same
Art symbolises heaven, but Love is God	Except that I was prouder than I knew,
And makes heaven. I, Aurora, fell from mine :	And not so honest. Ay, and, as I live,
I would not be a woman like the rest, A simple woman who believes in love, And owns the right of love because she loves,	I should have died so, crushing in my hand
And, hearing she's beloved, is satis- fied	This rose of love, the wasp inside and all,—
With what contents God : I must analyse,	Ignoring ever to my soul and you Both rose and pain,—except for this great loss,
Confront, and question ; just as if a fly	This great despair,—to stand before your face
	And know I cannot win a look of yours.

You think, perhaps, I am not
 changed from pride,
 And that I chiefly bear to say such
 words,
 Because you cannot shame me with
 your eyes ?
 O calm, grand eyes, extinguished in a
 storm,
 Blown out like lights o'er melancholy
 seas,
 Though shrieked for by the ship-
 wrecked,—O my Dark,
 My Cloud,—to go before me every
 day
 While I go ever toward the wilder-
 ness,—
 I would that you could see me bare to
 the soul !—
 If this be pity, 'tis so for myself,
 And not for Romney : *he* can stand
 alone ;
 A man like *him* is never overcome :
 No woman like me, counts him piti-
 able
 While saints applaud him. He mis-
 took the world :
 But I mistook my own heart,—and
 that slip
 Was fatal. Romney,—will you leave
 me here ?
 So wrong, so proud, so weak, so un-
 consoled,
 So mere a woman !—and I love you
 so,—
 I love you, Romney."
 Could I see his face,
 I wept so ? Did I drop against his
 breast,
 Or did his arms constrain me ? Were
 my cheeks
 Hot, overflowed, with my tears, or
 his ?
 And which of our two large explosive
 hearts
 So shook me ? That, I know not.
 There were words
 That broke in utterance . . . melted,
 in the fire ;
 Embrace, that was convulsion, . . .
 then a kiss . . .
 As long and silent as the ecstatic
 night,—
 And deep, deep, shuddering breaths,
 which meant beyond
 Whatever could be told by word or
 kiss.

But what he said . . . I have writ-
 ten day by day,
 With somewhat even writing. Did I
 think
 That such a passionate rain would
 intercept
 And dash this last page ? What he
 said, indeed,
 I fain would write it down here like
 the rest,
 To keep it in my eyes, as in my ears,
 The heart's sweet scripture, to be
 read at night
 When weary, or at morning when
 afraid,
 And lean my heaviest oath on when I
 swear
 That, when all's done, all tried, all
 counted here,
 All great arts, and all good philo-
 sophies,—
 This love just puts its hand out in a
 dream,
 And straight outreaches all things,
 What he said,
 I fain would write. But if an angel
 spoke
 In thunder, should we, haply, know
 much more
 Than that it thundered ? If a cloud
 came down
 And wrapt us wholly, could we draw
 its shape,
 As if on the outside, and not over-
 come ?
 And so he spake. His breath against
 my face
 Confused his words, yet made them
 more intense,—
 As when the sudden finger of the
 wind
 Will wipe a row of single city-lamps
 To a pure white line of flame, more
 luminous
 Because of obliteration ; more in-
 tense,—
 The intimate presence carrying in
 itself
 Complete communication, as with
 souls
 Who, having put the body off, per-
 ceive
 Through simply being. Thus, 'twas
 granted me
 To know he loved me to the depth
 and height

Of such large natures, ever competent
With grand horizons by the land or
sea,

To love's grand sunrise. Small
spheres hold small fires :

But he loved largely, as a man can
love

Who, baffled in his love, dares live his
life,

Accept the ends which God loves, for
his own,

And lift a constant aspect.

From the day
I had brought to England my poor
searching face

(An orphan even of my father's grave),
He had loved me, watched me,
watched his soul in mine,

Which in me grew and heightened
into love.

For he, a boy still, had been told the
tale

Of how a fairy bride from Italy,
With smells of oleanders in her hair,
Was coming through the vines to
touch his hand ;

Whereat the blood of boyhood on the
palm

Made sudden heats. And when at
last I came,

And lived before him, lived, and
rarely smiled,

He smiled and loved me for the thing
I was,

As every child will love the year's
first flower

(Not certainly the fairest of the year,
But, in which, the complete year
seems to blow),

The poor sad snowdrop,—growing be-
tween drifts,

Mysterious medium 'twixt the plant
and frost,

So faint with winter while so quick
with spring,

So doubtful if to thaw itself away
With that snow near it. Not that

Romney Leigh
Had loved me coldly. If I thought

so once,

It was as if I had held my hand in fire
And shook for cold. But now I
understood

For ever, that the very fire and heat
Of troubling passion in him, burned
him clear,

And shaped to dubious order, word
and act :

That, just because he loved me over
all,

All wealth, all lands, all social privi-
lege,

To which chance made him unex-
pected heir,—

And, just because on all these lesser
gifts,

Constrained by conscience and the
sense of wrong

He had stamped with steady hand
God's arrow-mark

Of dedication to the human need,
He thought it should be so too, with
his love ;

He, passionately loving, would bring
down

His love, his life, his best (because the
best),

His bride of dreams, who walked so
still and high

Through flowery poems as through
meadow-grass,

The dust of golden lilies on her feet,
That *she* should walk beside him on
the rocks

In all that clang and hewing out of
men,

And help the work of help which was
his life,

And prove he kept back nothing,—
not his soul.

And when I failed him,—for I failed
him, I—

And when it seemed he had missed
my love,—he thought,

"Aurora makes room for a working-
noon ;"

And so, self-girded with torn strips of
hope,

Took up his life, as if it were for
death

(Just capable of one heroic aim),
And threw it in the thickest of the

world,—

At which men laughed as if he had
drowned a dog :

No wonder,—since Aurora failed him
first !

The morning and the evening made
his day.

But oh, the night ! oh, bitter-sweet !
oh, sweet !

O dark, O moon and stars, O ecstasy
Of darkness ! O great mystery of
love,—

In which absorbed, loss, anguish,
treason's self

Enlarges rapture,—as a pebble dropt
In some full wine-cup, over-brims
the wine !

While we two sate together, leaned
that night

So close, my very garments crept and
thrilled

With strange electric life ; and both
my cheeks

Grew red, then pale, with touches
from my hair

In which his breath was ; while the
golden moon

Was hung before our faces as the
badge

Of some sublime inherited despair,
Since ever to be seen by only one,—

A voice said, low and rapid as a
sigh,

Yet breaking, I felt conscious, from a
smile,—

"Thank God, who made me blind, to
make me see !

Shine on, Aurora, dearest light of
souls,

Which rul'st for evermore both day
and night !

I am happy."

I flung closer to his breast,
As sword that, after battle, flings to
sheath

And, in that hurtle of united souls,
The mystic motions which in common
moods

Are shut beyond our sense, broke in
on us,

And, as we sate, we felt the old earth
spin,

And all the starry turbulence of
worlds

Swing round us in their audient
circles, till

If that same golden moon were over-
head

Or if beneath our feet, we did not
know.

And then calm, equal, smooth with
weights of joy,

His voice rose, as some chief musi-
cian's song

Amid the old Jewish temple's Selah-
pause,

And bade me mark how we two met
at last

Upon this moon-bathed promontory
of earth,

To give up much on each side, then
take all,

"Beloved," it sang, "we must be
here to work ;

And men who work, can only work
for men,

And, not to work in vain, must com-
prehend

Humanity, and, so, work humanly,
And raise men's bodies still by raising
souls,

As God did, first."

"But stand upon the earth,"
I said, "to raise them,—(this is
human too ;

There's nothing high which has not
first been low ;

My humbleness, said One, has made
me great !)

As God did, last."

"And work all silently,
And simply," he returned, "as God
does all ;

Distort our nature never, for our
work,

Nor count our right hands stronger
for being hoofs.

The man most man, with tenderest
human hands,

Works best for men,—as God in
Nazareth."

He paused upon the word, and then
resumed ;

"Fewer programmes ; we who have
no prescience.

Fewer systems ; we who are held and
do not hold.

Less mapping out of masses, to be
saved,

By nations or by sexes. Fourier's
void,

And Comte is dwarfed,—and Cabet,
puerile.

Subsist no rules of life outside of life ;
No perfect manners, without Chris-
tian souls :

The Christ Himself had been no Law-
giver,

Unless He had given the life, too,
with the law."

I echoed thoughtfully—"The man,
most man,

Works best for men: and, if most
man indeed,

He gets his manhood plainest from
his soul:

While, obviously, this stringent soul
itself

Obeys our old rules of development;
The Spirit ever witnessing in ours,

And Love, the soul of soul, within
the soul,

Evolving it sublimely. First, God's
love."

"And next," he smiled, "the love of
wedded souls,

Which still presents that mystery's
counterpart.

Sweet shadow-rose, upon the water of
life,

Of such a mystic substance, Sharon
gave

A name to! human, vital, fructuous
rose,

Whose calyx holds the multitude of
leaves,—

Loves filial, loves fraternal, neigh-
bour-loves,

And civic . . . all fair petals, all
good scents,

All reddened, sweetened from one
central Heart!"

"Alas," I cried, "it was not long ago,
You swore this very social rose smelt
ill."

"Alas," he answered, "is it a rose at
all?

The filial's thankless, the fraternal's
hard,

The rest is lost. I do but stand and
think,

Across dim waters of a troubled life
The Flower of Heaven so vainly over-
hangs,—

What perfect counterpart would be in
sight,

If tanks were clearer. Let us clean
the tubes,

And wait for rains. O poet, O my
love,

Since I was too ambitious in my deed,
And thought to distance all men in
success,

Till God came on me, marked the
place, and said,

'Ill-doer, henceforth keep within
this line,

Attempting less than others,'—and I
stand

And work among Christ's little ones,
content,—

Come thou, my compensation, my
dear sight,

My morning-star, my morning! rise
and shine,

And touch my hills with radiance not
their own;

Shine out for two, Aurora, and fulfil
My falling-short that must be! work
for two,

As I, though thus restrained, for
two, shall love!

Gaze on, with inscient vision toward
the sun,

And, from his visceral heat, pluck out
the roots

Of light beyond him. Art's a service,
—mark:

A silver key is given to thy clasp,
And thou shalt stand unwearied,

night and day,

And fix it in the hard, slow-turning
wards,

And open, so, that intermediate door
Betwixt the different planes of sen-
suous form

And form insensuous, that inferior
men

May learn to feel on still through these
to those,

And bless thy ministration. The
world waits

For help. Beloved, let us love so
well,

Our work shall still be better for our
love,

And still our love be sweeter for our
work,

And both, commended, for the sake of
each,

By all true workers and true lovers
born.

Now press the clarion on thy woman's
lip

(Love's holy kiss shall still keep con-
secrate)

And breathe the fine keen breath
 along the brass,
 And blow all class-walls level as
 Jericho's
 Past Jordan ; crying from the top of
 souls,
 To souls, that they assemble on
 earth's flats
 To get them to some purer eminence
 Than any hitherto beheld for clouds !
 What height we know not,—but the
 way we know,
 And how by mounting aye, we must
 attain,
 And so climb on. It is the hour for
 souls ;
 That bodies, leavened by the will and
 love,
 Be lightened to redemption. The
 world's old ;
 But the old world waits the hour to be
 renewed :
 Toward which, new hearts in indi-
 vidual growth
 Must quicken, and increase to multi-
 tude
 In new dynasties of the race of men,—
 Developed whence, shall grow spon-
 taneously
 New churches, new economies, new
 laws
 Admitting freedom, new societies

Excluding falsehood. He shall make
 all new."

My Romney !—Lifting up my hand
 in his,
 As wheeled by Seeing spirits toward
 the east,
 He turned instinctively,—where, faint
 and far,
 Along the tingling desert of the sky,
 Beyond the circle of the conscious
 hills,
 Were laid in jasper-stone as clear as
 glass
 The first foundations of that new,
 near Day
 Which should be builded out of
 heaven, to God.
 He stood a moment with erected
 brows,
 In silence, as a creature might, who
 gazed :
 Stood calm, and fed his blind, majestic
 eyes
 Upon the thought of perfect noon.
 And when
 I saw his soul saw,—“ Jasper first,” I
 said,
 “ And second, sapphire ; third, chalce-
 dony ;
 The rest in order, . . . last, an ame-
 thyst."

POEMS BEFORE CONGRESS

1860

PREFACE

THESE poems were written under the pressure of the events they indicate, after a residence in Italy of so many years, that the present triumph of great principles is heightened to the writer's feelings by the disastrous issue of the last movement, witnessed from "Casa Guidi Windows" in 1849. Yet, if the verses should appear to English readers too pun-
 gently rendered to admit of a patri-
 otic respect to the English sense of
 things, I will not excuse myself on
 such grounds, nor on the ground of
 my attachment to the Italian people,

and my admiration of their heroic
 constancy and union. What I have
 written has simply been written be-
 cause I love truth and justice *quand
 même*,—"more than Plato" and
 Plato's country, more than Dante
 and Dante's country, more even
 than Shakespeare and Shakespeare's
 country.

And if patriotism means the
 flattery of one's nation in every case,
 then the patriot, take it as you please,
 is merely a courtier ; which I am
 not, though I have written "Napo-
 leon III in Italy." It is time to
 limit the significance of certain terms,

or to enlarge the significance of certain things. Nationality is excellent in its place; and the instinct of self-love is the root of a man, which will develop into sacrificial virtues. But all the virtues are means and uses; and, if we hinder their tendency to growth and expansion, we both destroy them as virtues, and degrade them to that rankst species of corruption reserved for the most noble organisations. For instance, —non-intervention in the affairs of neighbouring states is a high political virtue; but non-intervention does not mean, passing by on the other side when your neighbour falls among thieves,—or Phariseism would recover it from Christianity. Freedom itself is virtue, as well as privilege; but freedom of the seas does not mean piracy, nor freedom of the land, brigandage; nor freedom of the senate, freedom to cudgel a dissident member, nor freedom of the press, freedom to calumniate and lie. So, if patriotism be a virtue indeed, it cannot mean an exclusive devotion to one's country's interests,—for that is only another form of devotion to personal interests, family interests, or provincial interests, all of which, if not driven past themselves, are vulgar and immoral objects. Let us put away the Little Peddlingtonism unworthy of a great nation, and too prevalent among us. If the man who does not look beyond this natural life is of a somewhat narrow order, what must be the man who does not look beyond his own frontier or his own sea?

I confess that I dream of the day when an English statesman shall arise with a heart too large for England, having courage in the face of his countrymen to assert of some suggested policy,—“This is good for your trade: this is necessary for your domination; but it will vex a people hard by; it will hurt a people farther off; it will profit nothing to the general humanity: therefore, away with it!—it is not for you or for me.” When a British minister dares speak so, and when a British

public applauds him speaking, then shall the nation be so glorious, that her praise, instead of exploding from within, from loud civic mouths, shall come to her from without, as all worthy praise must, from the alliances she has fostered and from the populations she has saved.

And poets who write of the events of that time, shall not need to justify themselves in prefaces, for ever so little jarring of the national sentiment, imputable to their rhymes.

ROME, February, 1860.

NAPOLEON III IN ITALY

I

EMPEROR, Emperor!

From the centre to the shore,
From the Seine back to the Rhine,
Stood eight millions up and swore
By their manhood's right divine

So to elect and legislate,
This man should renew the line
Broken in a strain of fate
And leagued kings at Waterloo,
When the people's hands let go.

Emperor
Evermore.

II

With a universal shout
They took the old regalia out
From an open grave that day;
From a grave that would not close,
Where the first Napoleon lay

Expectant, in repose,
As still as Merlin, with his conquering
face

Turned up in its unquenchable
appeal

To men and heroes of the advancing
race,—

Prepared to set the seal
Of what has been on what shall be.

Emperor
Evermore.

III

The thinkers stood aside
To let the nation act.
Some hated the new-constituted
fact

Of empire, as pride treading on their
pride.

Some quailed, lest what was poison-
ous in the past

Should graft itself in that Druidic
 bough
 On this green now.
 Some cursed, because at last
 The open heavens to which they had
 looked in vain
 For many a golden fall of marvellous
 rain
 Were closed in brass ; and some
 Wept on because a gone thing could
 not come ;
 And some were silent, doubting all
 things for
 That popular conviction,—ever-
 more Emperor.

IV

That day I did not hate
 Nor doubt, nor quail nor curse.
 I, reverencing the people, did not bate
 My reverence of their deed and oracle,
 Nor vainly prate
 Of better and of worse
 Against the great conclusion of their
 will.

And yet, O voice and verse,
 Which God set in me to acclaim and
 sing

Conviction, exaltation, aspiration,
 We gave no music to the patent' thing,
 Nor spared a holy rhythm to throb
 and swim

About the name of him
 Translated to the sphere of domina-
 tion

By democratic passion !
 I was not used, at least,
 Nor can be, now or then,
 To stroke the ermine beast
 On any kind of throne
 (Though builded by a nation for its
 own),

And swell the surging choir for kings
 of men—

“ Emperor
 Evermore.”

V

But now, Napoleon, now
 That, leaving far behind the purple
 throng

Of vulgar monarchs, thou
 Tread'st higher in thy deed
 Than stair of throne can lead,
 To help in the hour of wrong
 The broken hearts of nations to be
 strong,—

Now, lifted as thou art
 To the level of pure song,
 We stand to meet thee on these Alpine
 snows !
 And while the palpitating peaks
 break out
 Ecstatic from somnambular repose
 With answers to the presence and
 the shout,
 We, poets of the people, who take
 part

With elemental justice, natural
 right,

Join in our echoes also, nor refrain.
 We meet thee, O Napoleon, at this
 height

At last, and find thee great enough to
 praise.

Receive the poet's chrism, which
 smells beyond

The priest's, and pass thy ways ;—
 An English poet warns thee to main-
 tain

God's word, not England's :—let His
 truth be true

And all men liars ! with His truth
 respond

To all men's lie. Exalt the sword
 and smite

On that long anvil of the Apennine
 Where Austria forged the Italian
 chain in view

Of seven consenting nations, sparks
 of fine

Admonitory light,
 Till men's eyes wink before convic-
 tions new.

Flash in God's justice to the world's
 amaze,

Sublime Deliverer !—after many days
 Found worthy of the deed thou art
 come to do—

Emperor
 Evermore.

VI

But Italy, my Italy,
 Can it last, this gleam ?

Can she live and be strong,
 Or is it another dream

Like the rest we have dreamed so
 long ?

And shall it, must it be,
 That after the battle-cloud has
 broken

She will die off again
 Like the rain,

Or like a poet's song
Sung of her, sad at the end
Because her name is Italy,—
Die and count no friend?
Is it true,—may it be spoken,—
That she who has lain so still,
With a wound in her breast,
And a flower in her hand,
And a grave-stone under her head,
While every nation at will
Beside her has dared to stand
And flout her with pity and scorn,
Saying "She is at rest,
She is fair, she is dead,
And, leaving room in her stead
To Us who are later born,
This is certainly best!"
Saying "Alas, she is fair,
Very fair, but dead,
And so we have room for the race."
—Can it be true, be true,
That she lives anew?
That she rises up at the shout of her
sons,
At the trumpet of France,
And lives anew?—is it true
That she has not moved in a trance,
As in Forty-eight?

When her eyes were troubled with
blood
Till she knew not friend from foe,
Till her hand was caught in a strait
Of her cerement and baffled so
From doing the deed she would;
And her weak foot stumbled across
The grave of a king,
And down she dropt at heavy loss,
And we gloomily covered her face
and said,
"We have dreamed the thing;
She is not alive, but dead."

VII

Now, shall we say
Our Italy lives indeed?
And if it were not for the beat and
bray
Of drum and trump of martial men,
Should we feel the underground heave
and strain,
Where heroes left their dust as a
seed
Sure to emerge one day?
And if it were not for the rhythmic
march

B.P.

Of France and Piedmont's double
hosts,

Should we hear the ghosts
Thrill through ruined aisle and arch,
Throb along the frescoed wall,
Whisper an oath by that divine
They left in picture, book, and stone,
That Italy is not dead at all?
Ay, if it were not for the tears in our
eyes,

These tears of a sudden passionate joy,
Should we see her arise
From the place where the wicked are
overthrown,

Italy, Italy? loosed at length
From the tyrant's thrall,
Pale and calm in her strength?
Pale as the silver cross of Savoy
When the hand that bears the flag is
brave,

And not a breath is stirring, save
What is blown
Over the war-trump's lip of brass,
Ere Garibaldi forces the pass!

VIII

Ay, it is so, even so.
Ay, and it shall be so.
Each broken stone that long ago
She flung behind her as she went
In discouragement and bewilderment
Through the cairns of Time, and
missed her way
Between to-day and yesterday,
Up springs a living man.
And each man stands with his face in
the light
Of his own drawn sword,
Ready to do what a hero can.
Wall to sap, or river to ford,
Cannon to front, or foe to pursue,
Still ready to do, and sworn to be
true,

As a man and a patriot can.
Piedmontese, Neapolitan,
Lombard, Tuscan, Romagnole,
Each man's body having a soul,—
Count how many they stand,
All of them sons of the land,
Every live man there
Allied to a dead man below,
And the deadest with blood to
spare

To quicken a living hand
In case it should ever be slow.

M M

Count how many they come
To the beat of Piedmont's drum,
With faces keener and grayer
Than swords of the Austrian slayer,
All set against the foe.

"Emperor
Evermore."

IX

Out of the dust, where they ground
them,
Out of the holes, where they dogged
them,
Out of the hulks, where they wound
them
In iron, tortured and flogged them ;
Out of the streets, where they chased
them,
Taxed them and then bayonnetted
them,—
Out of the homes, where they spied on
them,
(Using their daughters and wives),
Out of the church, where they fretted
them,
Rotted their souls and debased them,
Trained them to answer with knives,
Then cursed them all at their
prayers!—
Out of cold lands, not theirs,
Where they exiled them, starved
them, lied on them ;
Back they come like a wind, in vain
Cramped up in the hills, that roars
its road
The stronger into the open plain ;
Or like a fire that burns the hotter
And longer for the crust of cinder,
Serving better the ends of the potter ;
Or like a restrained word of God,
Fulfilling itself by what seems to
hinder.

"Emperor
Evermore."

X

Shout for France and Savoy !
Shout for the helper and doer.
Shout for the good sword's ring,
Shout for the thought still truer.
Shout for the spirits at large
Who passed for the dead this spring,
Whose living glory is sure.
Shout for France and Savoy !
Shout for the council and charge !
Shout for the head of Cavour ;

And shout for the heart of a King
That's great with a nation's joy.
Shout for France and Savoy !

XI

Take up the child, Macmahon,
though
Thy hand be red
From Magenta's dead,
And riding on, in front of the troop,
In the dust of the whirlwind of war
Through the gate of the city of Milan,
stoop
And take up the child to thy saddle-
bow,
Nor fear the touch as soft as a flower
Of his smile as clear as a star !
Thou hast a right to the child, we say,
Since the women are weeping for joy
as those
Who, by thy help and from this day,
Shall be happy mothers indeed.
They are raining flowers from terrace
and roof :
Take up the flower in the child.
While the shout goes up of a nation
freed
And heroically self-reconciled,
Till the snow on that peaked Alp aloof
Starts, as feeling God's finger anew,
And all those cold white marble fires
Of mounting saints on the Duomo
spires
Flicker against the Blue.
"Emperor
Evermore."

XII

Ay, it is He,
Who rides at the King's right hand !
Leave room to his horse and draw to
the side,
Nor press too near in the ecstasy
Of a newly delivered impassioned
land :
He is moved, you see,
He who has done it all.
They call it a cold stern face ;
But this is Italy
Who rises up to her place !—
For this he fought in his youth,
Of this he dreamed in the past ;
The lines of the resolute mouth
Tremble a little at last.
Cry, he has done it all !
"Emperor
Evermore,"

XIII

It is not strange that he did it,
 Though the deed may seem to strain
 To the wonderful, unpermitted,
 For such as lead and reign.
 But he is strange, this man :
 The people's instinct found him
 (A wind in the dark that ran
 Through a chink where was no door),
 And elected him and crowned him
 Emperor
 Evermore.

XIV

Autocrat ? let them scoff,
 Who fail to comprehend
 That a ruler incarnate of
 The people, must transcend
 All common king-born kings.
 These subterranean springs
 A sudden outlet winning,
 Have special virtues to spend.
 The people's blood runs through him,
 Dilates from head to foot,
 Creates him absolute,
 And from this great beginning
 Evokes a greater end
 To justify and renew him—
 Emperor
 Evermore.

XV

What ! did any maintain
 That God or the people (think !)
 Could make a marvel in vain ?—
 Out of the water-lar there,
 Draw wine that none could drink ?
 Is this a man like the rest,
 This miracle, made unaware
 By a rapture of popular air,
 And caught to the place that was
 best ?
 You think he could barter and cheat
 As vulgar diplomats use,
 With the people's heart in his breast ?
 Prate a lie into shape
 Lest truth should cumber the road ;
 Play at the fast and loose
 Till the world is strangled with tape ;
 Maim the soul's complete
 To fit the hole of a toad ;
 And filch the dogman's meat
 To feed the offspring of God ?

XVI

Nay, but he, this wonder,
 He cannot palter nor prate,

Though many around him and under,
 With intellects trained to the curve,
 Distrust him in spirit and nerve
 Because his meaning is straight.
 Measure him ere he depart
 With those who have governed and
 led ;
 Larger so much by the heart,
 Larger so much by the head.
 Emperor
 Evermore.

XVII

He holds that, consenting or dissident,
 Nations must move with the time ;
 Assumes that crime with a precedent
 Doubles the guilt of the crime ;
 —Denies that a slaver's bond,
 Or a treaty signed by knaves
 (*Quorum magna pars* and beyond
 Was one of an honest name)
 Gives an unexpugnable claim
 To abolishing men into slaves.
 Emperor
 Evermore.

XVIII

He will not swagger nor boast
 Of his country's meeds, in a tone
 Missuiting a great man most
 If such should speak of his own ;
 Nor will he act, on her side,
 From motives baser, indeed,
 Than a man of a noble pride
 Can avow for himself at need ;
 Never, for lucre or laurels,
 Or custom, though such should be
 rife,
 Adapting the smaller morals
 To measure the larger life.
 He, though the merchants persuade,
 And the soldiers are eager for strife,
 Finds not his country in quarrels
 Only to find her in trade,—
 While still he accords her such honour
 As never to flinch for her sake
 Where men put service upon her,
 Found heavy to undertake
 And scarcely like to be paid :
 Believing a nation may act
 Unselfishly—shiver a lance
 (As the least of her sons may, in
 fact)
 And not for a cause of finance.
 Emperor
 Evermore.

XIX

Great is he,
 Who uses his greatness for all.
 His name shall stand perpetually
 As a name to applaud and cherish,
 Not only within the civic wall
 For the loyal, but also without
 For the generous and free.
 Just is he,
 Who is just for the popular due
 As well as the private debt.
 The praise of nations ready to perish
 Fall on him,—crown him in view
 Of tyrants caught in the net,
 And statesmen dizzy with fear and
 doubt!
 And though, because they are many,
 And he is merely one,
 And nations selfish and cruel
 Heap up the inquisitor's fuel
 To kill the body of high intents,
 And burn great deeds from their place,
 Till this, the greatest of any,
 May seem imperfectly done;
 Courage, whoever circumvents!
 Courage, courage, whoever is base!
 The soul of a high intent, be it known,
 Can die no more than any soul
 Which God keeps by Him under the
 throne
 And this, at whatever interim,
 Shall live, and be consummated
 Into the being of deeds made whole.
 Courage, courage! happy is he,
 Of whom (himself among the dead
 And silent) this word shall be said:
 —That he might have had the world
 with him,
 But chose to side with suffering men,
 And had the world against him
 when
 He came to deliver Italy.
 Emperor
 Evermore.

THE DANCE

I

You remember down at Florence our
 Cascine,
 Where the people on the feast-days
 walk and drive,
 And, through the trees, long-drawn
 in many a green way,
 O'er-roofing hum and murmur like a
 hive,

The river and the mountains look
 alive?

II

You remember the piazzone there,
 the stand-place
 Of carriages a-brim with Florence
 Beauties,
 Who lean and melt to music as the
 band plays,
 Or smile and chat with some one
 who afoot is,
 Or on horseback, in observance of
 male duties?

III

'Tis so pretty, in the afternoons of
 summer,
 So many gracious faces brought to-
 gether!
 Call it rout, or call it concert, they
 have come here,
 In the floating of the fan and of the
 feather,
 To reciprocate with beauty the fine
 weather.

IV

While the flower-girls offer nosegays
 (because *they* too
 Go with other sweets) at every
 carriage-door;
 Here, by shake of a white finger,
 signed away to
 Some next buyer, who sits buying
 score on score,
 Piling roses upon roses evermore.

V

And last season, when the French
 camp had its station
 In the meadow-ground, things
 quickened and grew gayer
 Through the mingling of the liberat-
 ing nation
 With this people; groups of
 Frenchmen everywhere,
 Strolling, gazing, judging lightly..
 "who was fair."

VI

Then the noblest lady present took
 upon her
 To speak nobly from her carriage
 for the rest;
 "Pray these officers from France to
 do us honour
 By dancing with us straightway."—
 The request

Was gravely apprehended as addressed.

VII

And the men of France bareheaded,
bowing lowly,
Led out each a proud signora to
the space
Which the startled crowd had rounded
for them—slowly,
Just a touch of still emotion in his
face,
Not presuming, through the sym-
bol, on the grace.

VIII

There was silence in the people :
some lips trembled,
But none jested. Broke the music,
at a glance :
And the daughters of our princes,
thus assembled,
Stepped the measure with the
gallant sons of France.
Hush ! it might have been a Mass,
and not a dance.

IX

And they danced there till the blue
that overskied us
Swooned with passion, though the
footing seemed sedate ;
And the mountains, heaving mighty
hearts beside us,
Sighed a rapture in a shadow, to
dilate,
And touch the holy stone where
Dante sate.

X

Then the sons of France bareheaded,
lowly bowing,
Led the ladies back where kinsmen
of the south
Stood, received them ;—till, with
burst of overflowing
Feeling . . . husbands, brothers,
Florence's male youth,
Turned, and kissed the martial
strangers mouth to mouth

XI

And a cry went up, a cry from all
that people !
—You have heard a people cheer-
ing, you suppose,
For the Member, maydr . . . with
chorus from the steeple ?

This was different : scarce as loud
perhaps (who knows ?),
For we saw wet eyes around us ere
the close.

XII

And we felt as if a nation, too long
borne in
By hard wrongers, comprehend-
ing in such attitude
That God had spoken somewhere
since the morning,
That men were somehow brothers,
by no platitude,
Cried exultant in great wonder
and free gratitude.

A TALE OF VILLAGRANCA

TOLD IN TUSCANY

I

My little son, my Florentine,
Sit down beside my knee,
And I will tell you why the sign
Of joy which flushed our Italy,
Has faded since but yesternight ;
And why your Florence of delight
Is mourning as you see.

II

A great man (who was crowned one
day)
Imagined a great Deed :
He shaped it out of cloud and clay,
He touched it finely till the seed
Possessed the flower : from heart and
brain
He fed it with large thoughts humane,
To help a people's need.

III

He brought it out into the sun—
They blessed it to his face :
" O great pure Deed, that hast undone
So many bad and base !
O generous Deed, heroic Deed,
Come forth, be perfected, succeed,
Deliver by God's grace."

IV

Then sovereigns, statesmen, north
and south,
Rose up in wrath and fear,
And cried, protesting by one mouth,
" What monster have we here ?
A great Deed at this hour of day ?
A great just Deed—and not for pay ?
Absurd,—or insincere."

V

"And if sincere, the heavier blow
In that case we shall bear,
For where's our blessed 'status quo,'
Our holy treaties, where,—
Our rights to sell a race, or buy,
Protect and pillage, occupy,
And civilise despair?"

VI

Some muttered that the great Deed
meant
A great pretext to sin;
And others, the pretext, so lent,
Was heinous (to begin).
Volcanic terms of "great" and
"just"?
Admit such tongues of flame, the
crust
Of time and law falls in.

VII

A great Deed in this world of ours?
Unheard of the pretence is:
It threatens plainly the great Powers;
Is fatal in all senses.
A just Deed in the world?—call out
The rifles! be not slack about
The national defences.

VIII

And many murmured, "From this
source
What red blood must be poured!"
And some rejoined, "'Tis even worse;
What red tape is ignored!"
All cursed the Doer for an evil
Called here, enlarging on the Devil,—
There, monkeying the Lord!

IX

Some said, it could not be explained,
Some, could not be excused;
And others, "Leave it unrestrained,
Gehenna's self is loosed."
And all cried, "Crush it, maim it, gag
it!
Set dog-toothed lies to tear it ragged,
Truncated and traduced!"

X

But HE stood sad before the sun,
(The peoples felt their fate).
"The world is many,—I am one;
My great Deed was too great.
God's fruit of justice ripens slow:
Men's souls are narrow; let them
grow.
My brothers, we must wait."

XI

The tale is ended, child of mine,
Turned graver at my knee.
They say your eyes, my Florentine,
Are English: it may be:
And yet I've marked as blue a pair
Following the doves across the square
At Venice by the sea.

XII

Ah child! ah child! I cannot say
A word more. You conceive
The reason now, why just to-day
We see our Florence grieve.
Ah child, look up into the sky!
In this low world, where great Deeds
die,
What matter if we live?

A COURT LADY

I

HER hair was tawny with gold, her
eyes with purple were dark,
Her cheeks' pale opal burnt with a
red and restless spark.

II

Never was lady of Milan nobler in
name and in race;
Never was lady of Italy fairer to see
in the face.

III

Never was lady on earth more true as
woman and wife,
Larger in judgment and instinct,
prouder in manners and life.

IV

She stood in the early morning, and
said to her maidens "Bring
That silken robe made ready to wear
at the Court of the King."

V

"Bring me the clasps of diamond,
lucid, clear of the mote,
Clasp me the large at the waist, and
clasp me the small at the throat."

VI

"Diamonds to fasten the hair, and
diamonds to fasten the sleeves,
Laces to drop from their rays, like a
powder of snow from the eaves."

VII

Gorgeous she entered the sunlight
which gathered her up in a flame,
While, straight in her open carriage,
she to the hospital came.

VIII

In she went at the door, and gazing
from end to end,
"Many and low are the pallets, but
each is the place of a friend."

IX

Up she passed through the wards,
and stood at a young man's bed :
Bloody the band on his brow, and
livid the droop of his head.

X

"Art thou a Lombard, my brother ?
Happy art thou," she cried,
And smiled like Italy on him : he
dreamed in her face and died.

XI

Pale with his passing soul, she went
on still to a second :
He was a grave hard man, whose
years by dungeons were reckoned.

XII

Wounds in his body were sore,
wounds in his life were sorer.
"Art thou a Romagnole ?" Her
eyes drove lightnings before her.

XIII

Austrian and priest had joined to
double and tighten the cord
Able to bind thee, O strong one,—
free by the stroke of a sword.

XIV

"Now be grave for the rest of us,
using the life overcast
To ripen our wine of the present (too
new) in glooms of the past."

XV

Down she stepped to a pallet where
lay a face like a girl's
Young, and pathetic with dying,—a
deep black hole in the curls.

XVI

"Art thou from Tuscany, brother ?
and seest thou, dreaming in pain,
Thy mother stand in the piazza,
searching the list of the slain?"

XVII

Kind as a mother herself, she touched
his cheeks with her hands :
"Blessed is she who has borne thee,
although she should weep as she
stands."

XVIII

On she passed to a Frenchman, his
arm carried off by a ball :
Kneeling . . . "O more than my
brother ! how shall I thank thee
for all ?

XIX

"Each of the heroes around us has
fought for his land and line,
But *thou* hast fought for a stranger,
in hate of a wrong not thine.

XX

"Happy are all free peoples, too
strong to be dispossessed.
But blessed are those among nations,
who dare to be strong for the
rest !"

XXI

Ever she passed on her way, and came
to a couch where pined
One with a face from Venetia, white
with a hope out of mind.

XXII

Long she stood and gazed, and twice
she tried at the name,
But two great crystal tears were all
that faltered and came.

XXIII

Only a tear for Venice ?—she
turned as in passion and loss,
And stooped to his forehead and
kissed it, as if she were kissing
the Cross.

XXIV

Faint with that strain of heart she
moved on then to another,
Stern and strong in his death. "And
dost thou suffer, my brother ?"

XXV

Holding his hands in hers :—"Out of
the Piedmont lion
Cometh the sweetness of freedom !
sweetest to live or to die on."

XXVI

Holding his cold rough hands,—
"Well, oh, well have ye done
In noble, noble Piedmont, who
would not be noble alone."

XXVII

Back he fell while she spoke. She
rose to her feet with a spring,—
"That was a Piedmontese ! and this
is the Court of the King."

AN AUGUST VOICE

"Una voce augusta."—MONITORE TOSCANO.

I

You'll take back your Grand Duke?

I made the treaty upon it.

Just venture a quiet rebuke;

Dall' Ongaro write him a sonnet;

Ricasoli gently explain

Some need of the constitution:

He'll swear to it over again,

Providing an "easy solution."

You'll call back the Grand Duke.

II

You'll take back your Grand Duke?

I promised the Emperor Francis

To argue the case by his book,

And ask you to meet his advances.

The Ducal cause, we know

(Whether you or he be the wronger),

Has very strong points;—although

Your bayonets, there, have stronger.

You'll call back the Grand Duke.

III

You'll take back your Grand Duke?

He is not pure altogether.

For instance, the oath which he took

(In the Forty-eight rough weather)

He'd "nail your flag to his mast,"

Then softly scuttled the boat you

Hoped to escape in at last,

And both by a "Proprio motu."

You'll call back the Grand Duke.

IV

You'll take back your Grand Duke?

The scheme meets nothing to shock

it

In this smart letter, look,

We found in Radetsky's pocket;

Where his Highness in sprightly style

Of the flower of his Tuscans wrote,

"These heads be the hottest in file;

Pray shoot them the quickest."

Quote,

And call back the Grand Duke.

V

You'll take back your Grand Duke?

There *are* some things to object to.

He cheated, betrayed, and forsook,

Then called in the foe to protect

you.

He taxed you for wines and for meats

Throughout that eight years' pas-

time

Of Austria's drum in your streets—

Of course you remember the last
time

You called back your Grand Duke?

VI

You'll take back the Grand Duke?

It is not race he is poor in,

Although he never could brook

The patriot cousin at Turin.

His love of kin you discern,

By his hate of your flag and me—

So decidedly apt to turn

All colours at the sight of the

Three.¹

You'll call back the Grand Duke.

VII

You'll take back your Grand Duke?

'Twas weak that he fled from the

Pitti;

But consider how little he shook

At thought of bombarding your

city!

And, balancing that with this,

The Christian rule is plain for us;

... Or the Holy Father's Swiss

Have shot his Perugians in vain for

us.

You'll call back the Grand Duke.

VIII

Pray take back your Grand Duke.

—I, too, have suffered persuasion.

All Europe, raven and rook,

Screeched at me armed for your

nation.

Your cause in my heart struck spurs;

I swept such warnings aside for

you:

My very child's eyes, and Hers,

Grew like my brother's who died

for you.

You'll call back the Grand Duke?

IX

You'll take back your Grand Duke?

My French fought nobly with

reason,—

Left many a Lombardy nook

Red as with wine out of season.

Little we grudged what was done

there,

Paid freely your ransom of blood:

Our heroes stark in the sun there,

We would not recall if we could.

You'll call back the Grand Duke?

¹ The Italian tricolor: red, green, and white.

X

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?

His son rode fast as he got off
That day on the enemy's hook,
When I had an epaulette shot off.
Though splashed (as I saw him afar,
no,

Near) by those ghastly rains,
The mark, when you've washed him
in Arno,

Will scarcely be larger than Cain's.
You'll call back the Grand Duke ?

XI

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?

'Twill be so simple, quite beautiful :
The shepherd recovers his crook,

... If you should be sheep, and
dutiful.

I spoke a word worth chalking

On Milan's wall—but stay,

Here's Poniatowsky talking,—

You'll listen to *him* to-day,
And call back the Grand Duke.

XII

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?

Observe, there's no one to force it,—

Unless the Madonna, Saint Luke

Drew for you, choose to endorse it.

I charge you, by great Saint Martino

And prodigies quickened by wrong,

Remember your Dead on Ticino ;

Be worthy, be constant, be strong—

—Bah !—call back the Grand Duke !!

CHRISTMAS GIFTS

“ὡς βασιλεῖ, ὡς θεῷ, ὡς νεκρῷ.”

—GREGORY NAZIANZEN.

I

THE Pope on Christmas Day

Sits in Saint Peter's chair ;

But the peoples murmur and say,

“Our souls are sick and forlorn,

And who will show us where

Is the stable where Christ was
born ?”

II

The star is lost in the dark ;

The manger is lost in the straw ;

The Christ cries faintly . . . hark ! . . .

Through bands that swaddle and
strangle—

But the Pope in the chair of awe

Looks down the great quadrangle.

III

The Magi kneel at His foot,

Kings of the East and West,

But, instead of the angels' mute

Is the “Peace on earth” of their
song),

The peoples, perplexed and oppress,

Are sighing, “How long, how long ?”

IV

And, instead of the kine, bewilder in

Shadow of aisle and dome,

The bear who tore up the children,

The fox who burnt up the corn,

And the wolf who suckled at Rome

Brothers to slay and to scorn.

V

Cardinals left and right of him,

Worshippers round and beneath,

The silver trumpets at sight of him

Thrill with a musical blast :

But the people say through their
teeth,

“Trumpets ? we wait for the Last !”

VI

He sits in the place of the Lord,

And asks for the gifts of the time ;

Gold, for the haft of a sword

To win back Romagna averse,

Incense, to sweeten a crime,

And myrrh, to embitter a curse.

VII

Then a king of the West said, “Good !—

I bring thee the gifts of the time ;

Red, for the patriot's blood,

Green, for the martyr's crown,

White, for the dew and the time,

When the morning of God comes
down.”

VIII

—O mystic tricolor bright !

The Pope's heart quailed like a
man's ;

The cardinals froze at the sight,

Bowing their tonsures hoary :

And the eyes in the peacock-fans

Winked at the alien glory,

IX

But the peoples exclaimed in hope,

“Now blessed be he who has
brought

These gifts of the time to the Pope,

When our souls were sick and for-
lorn,

—And *here* is the star we sought,
To show us where Christ was born !”

ITALY AND THE WORLD

I

FLORENCE, Bologna, Parma, Modena.
When you named them a year ago,
So many graves reserved by God, in a
Day of judgment, you seemed to
know,
To open and let out the resurrection.

II

And meantime (you made your
reflection
If you were English) was nought to
be done
But sorting sables, in predilection
For all those martyrs dead and
gone,
Till the new earth and heaven made
ready.

III

And if your politics were not heady,
Violent . . . “Good,” you added,
“good
In all things ! Mourn on sure and
steady.
Churchyard thistles are wholesome
food
For our European wandering asses.

IV

“The date of the resurrection passes
Human fore-knowledge : men un-
born
Will gain by it (even in the lower
classes),
But none of these. It is not the
morn
Because the cock of France is crowing.

V

“Cocks crow at midnight, seldom
knowing
Starlight from dawnlight : ‘tis a mad
Poor creature.” Here you paused,
and growing
Scornful . . . suddenly, let us add,
The trumpet sounded, the graves
were open.

VI

Life and life and life ! agropo in
The dusk of death, warm hands,
stretched out
For swords, proved more life still to
hope in,

Beyond and behind. Arise with
a shout,
Nation of Italy, slain and buried !

VII

Hill to hill and turret to turret
Flashing the tricolor,—newly
created
Beautiful Italy, calm, unhurried,
Rise heroic and renovated,
Rise to the final restitution.

VIII

Rise ; prefigure the grand solution
Of earth’s municipal, insular
schisms,—
Statesmen draping self-love’s conclu-
sion
In cheap, vernacular patriotisms,
Unable to give up Judæa for Jesus.

IX

Bring us the higher example ; release
us
Into the larger coming time :
And into Christ’s broad garment
piece us
Rags of virtue as poor as crime,
National selfishness, civic vaunting.

X

No more Jew nor Greek then,—taunt-
ing
Nor taunted ; —no more England
nor France !
But one confederate brotherhood
planting
One flag only, to mark the advance,
Onward and upward, of all humanity.

XI

For civilisation perfected
Is fully developed Christianity.
“Measure the frontier,” shall it be
said,
“Count the ships,” in national
vanity ?
—Count the nation’s heart-beats
sooner.

XII

For, though behind by a cannon or
schooner,
That nation still is predominant,
Whose pulse beats quickest in zeal to
oppugn or
Succour another, in wrong or want,
Passing the frontier in love and ab-
horrence,

XIII

Modena, Parma, Bologna, Florence,
Open us out the wider way !
Dwarf in that chapel of old Saint
Lawrence

Your Michel Angelo's giant "Day,"
With the grandeur of this Day break-
ing o'er us !

XIV

Ye who, restrained as an ancient
chorus,

Mute while, the coryphæus spake,
Hush your separate voices before us,
Sink your separate lives for the
sake

Of one sole Italy's living for ever !

XV

Givers of coat and cloak too,—never
Grudging that purple of yours at
the best,—

By your heroic will and endeavour
Each sublimely dispossessed,
That all may inherit what each sur-
renders !

XVI

Earth shall bless you, O noble
emenders

On egotist nations ! Ye shall lead
The plough of the world, and sow
new splendours

Into the furrow of things, for seed,—
Ever the richer for what ye have
given.

XVII

Lead us and teach us, till earth and
heaven

Grow larger around us and higher
above.

Our sacrament-bread has a bitter
leaven ;

We bait our traps with the name of
love,

Till hate itself has a kinder meaning.

XVIII

Oh, this world : this cheating and
screening

Of cheats ! this conscience for
candle-wicks,

Not beacon-fires ! this overweening
Of underhand diplomatical tricks,

Dared for the country while scorned
for the counter !

XIX

Oh, this envy of those who mount
here,

And oh, this malice to make them
trip !

Rather quenching the fire there,
drying the fount here,

To frozen body and thirsty lip,
Than leave to a neighbour their
ministration.

XX

I cry aloud in my poet-passion,
Viewing my England o'er Alp and
sea.

I loved her more in her ancient fashion:
She carries her rifles too thick for
me,

Who spares them so in the cause of a
brother.

XXI

Suspicion, panic ? end this pother.

The sword, kept sheathless at
peace-time, rusts,

None fears for himself while he feels
for another :

The brave man either fights or
trusts,

And wears no mail in his private
chamber.

XXII

Beautiful Italy ! golden amber

Warm with the kisses of lover and
traitor !

Thou who' hast drawn us on to re-
member,

Draw us to hope now : let us be
greater

By this new future than that old story.

XXIII

Till truer glory replaces all glory,

As the torch grows blind at the dawn
of day ;

And the nations, rising up, their sorry
And foolish sins shall put away,

As children their toys when the
teacher enters.

XXIV

Till Love's one centre devour these
centres

Of many self-loves ; and the
patriot's trick

To better his land by egotist ventures,
Defamed from a virtue, shall make
men sick,

As the scalp at the belt of some red
hero.

xxv

For certain virtues have dropped to
zero,

Left by the sun on the mountain's
dewy side;

Churchman's charities, tender as
Nero,

Indian suttee, heathen suicide,
Service to rights divine, proved hollow:

xxvi

And Heptarchy patriotisms must
follow.

—National voices, distinct yet
dependent,

Enspiring each other, as swallow
does swallow,

With circles still widening and ever
ascendant,

In multiform life to united progres-
sion,—

xxvii

These shall remain. And when, in
the session

Of nations, the separate language
is heard,

Each shall aspire, in sublime indis-
cretion,

To help with a thought or exalt
with a word

Less her own than her rival's honour.

xxviii

Each Christian nation shall take upon
her

The law of the Christian man in
vast:

The crown of the getter shall fall to
the donor,

And last shall be first while first
shall be last,

And to love best shall still be, to reign
unsurpassed.

A CURSE FOR A NATION

PROLOGUE

I HEARD an angel speak last night,

And he said, "Write!

Write a Nation's curse for me,
And send it over the Western Sea."

I faltered, taking up the word:

"Not so, my lord!

If curses must be, choose another
To send thy curse against my brother.

"For I am bound by gratitude,
By love and blood,
To brothers of mine across the sea,
Who stretch out kindly hands to me."

"Therefore," the voice said, "shalt
thou write

My curse to-night.

From the summits of love a curse is
driven,

As lightning is from the tops of
heaven."

"Not so," I answered. "Evermore
My heart is sore

For my own land's sins: for little
feet

Of children bleeding along the street:

"For parked-up honours that gain-
say

The right of way:

For almsgiving through a door that is
Not open enough for two friends to
kiss:

"For love of freedom which abates
Beyond the Straits:

For patriot virtue starved to vice on
Self-praise, self-interest, and suspi-
cion:

"For an oligarchic parliament,
And bribes well-meant.

What curse to another land assign,
When heavy-souled for the sins of
mine?"

"Therefore," the voice said, "shalt
thou write

My curse to-night.

Because though hast strength to see
and hate

A foul thing done *within* thy gate."

"Not so," I answered once again.

"To curse, choose men.

For I, a woman, have only known
How the heart melts and the tears
run down."

"Therefore," the voice said, "shalt
thou write

My curse to-night.

Some women weep and curse, I say
(And no one marvels), night and day.

"And thou shalt take their part to-
night,

Weep and write.

A curse from the depths of woman-
hood
Is very salt, and bitter, and good."

So thus I wrote, and mourned indeed,
What all may read.
And thus, as was enjoined on me,
I send it over the Western Sea.

THE CURSE

I

BECAUSE ye have broken your own
chain

With the strain
Of brave men climbing a Nation's
height,
Yet thence bear down with brand
and thong
On souls of others,—for this wrong
This is the curse. Write.

Because yourselves are standing
straight

In the state
Of Freedom's foremost acolyte,
Yet keep calm footing all the time
On writhing bond-slaves,—for this
crime

This is the curse. Write.

Because ye prosper in God's name,
With a claim

To honour in the old world's sight,
Yet do the fiend's work perfectly
In strangling martyrs,—for this lie
This is the curse. Write.

II

Ye shall watch while kings conspire
Round the people's smouldering fire,
And, warm for your part,
Shall never dare—O shame!
To utter the thought into flame
Which burns at your heart.
This is the curse. Write.

Ye shall watch while nations strive
With the bloodhounds, die or survive,
Drop faint from their jaws,

Or throttle them backward to death,
And only under your breath
Shall favour the cause.

This is the curse. Write.

Ye shall watch while strong men draw
The nets of feudal law
To strangle the weak,
And, counting the sin for a sin,
Your soul shall be sadder within
Than the word ye shall speak.
This is the curse. Write.

When good men are praying erect
That Christ may avenge His elect
And deliver the earth,
The prayer in your ears, said low,
Shall sound like the tramp of a foe
That's driving you forth.
This is the curse. Write.

When wise men give you their praise,
They shall pause in the heat of the
phrase,
As if carried too far.

When ye boast your own charters
kept true,
Ye shall blush;—for the thing which
ye do

Derides what ye are.
This is the curse. Write.

When fools cast taunts at your gate,
Your scorn ye shall somewhat abate
As ye look o'er the wall,
For your conscience, tradition, and
name

Explode with a deadlier blame
Than the worst of them all.
This is the curse. Write.

Go, wherever ill deeds shall be done,
Go, plant your flag in the sun
Beside the ill-doers!
And recoil from clenching the curse
Of God's witnessing Universe
With a curse of yours.

THIS is the curse. Write.

LAST POEMS

1862

TO "GRATEFUL FLORENCE,"
TO THE MUNICIPALITY, HER REPRESENTATIVE,
AND TO TOMMASEO, ITS SPOKESMAN,
MOST GRATEFULLY.

LAST POEMS
ADVERTISEMENT

THESE Poems are given as they occur on a list drawn up last June. A few had already been printed in periodicals.

There is hardly such direct warrant for publishing the Translations; which were only intended, many years ago, to accompany and explain certain Engravings after ancient Gems, in the projected work of a friend, by whose kindness they are now recovered: but as two of the original series (the "Adonis" of Bion, and "Song to the Rose" from Achilles Tatius) have subsequently appeared, it is presumed that the remainder may not improperly follow.

A single recent version is added.

LONDON, February, 1862.

LITTLE MATTIE

I

DEAD! Thirteen a month ago!
Short and narrow her life's walk;
Lover's love she could not know
Even by a dream or talk:
Too young to be glad of youth,
Missing honour, labour, rest,
And the warmth of a babe's mouth
At the blossom of her breast.
Must you pity her for this
And for all the loss it is,
You, her mother, with wet face,
Having had all in your case?

II.

Just so young but yesternight,
Now she is as old as death.
Meek, obedient in your sight,
Gentle to a beck or breath
Only on last Monday! Yours,
Answering you like silver bells
Lightly touched! An hour matures:
You can teach her nothing else.

She has seen the mystery hid
Under Egypt's pyramid:
By those eyelids pale and close
Now she knows what Rhameses knows.

III

Cross her quiet hands, and smooth
Down her patient locks of silk,
Cold and passive as in truth
You your fingers in spilt milk
Drew along a marble floor;
But her lips you cannot wring
Into saying a word more,
"Yes," or "No," or such a thing:
Though you call and beg and wreak
Half your soul out in a shriek,
She will lie there in default
And most innocent revolt.

IV

Ay, and if she spoke, maybe
She would answer, like the Son,
"What is now 'twixt thee and me?"
Dreadful answer! better none.
Yours on Monday, God's to-day!
Yours, your child, your blood,
your heart,
Called . . . you called her, did you
say,

"Little Mattie" for your part?
Now already it sounds strange,
And you wonder, in this change,
What He calls His angel-creature,
Higher up than you can reach her.

V

'Twas a green and easy world
As she took it; room to play
(Though one's hair might get uncurl'd
At the far end of the day).
What she suffered she shook off
In the sunshine; what she sinned
She could pray on high enough
To keep safe above the wind.
If reproved by God or you,
'Twas to better her, she knew;
And if crossed, she gathered still
'Twas to cross out something ill.

VI

You, you had the right, you thought,
 To survey her with sweet scorn,
 Poor gay child, who had not caught
 Yet the octave-stretch forlorn
 Of your larger wisdom ! Nay,
 Now your places are changed so,
 In that same superior way
 She regards you dull and low
 As you did herself exempt
 From life's sorrows. Grand contempt
 Of the spirits risen awhile,
 Who look back with such a smile !

VII

There's the sting of't. That, I think,
 Hurts the most a thousandfold !
 To feel sudden, at a wink,
 Some dear child we used to scold,
 Praise, love both ways, kiss and tease,
 Teach and tumble as our own,
 All its curls about our knees,
 Rise up suddenly full-grown.
 Who could wonder such a sight
 Made a woman mad outright ?
 Show me Michael with the sword
 Rather than such angels, Lord !

A FALSE STEP

I

SWEET, thou hast trod on a heart.
 Pass ! there's a world full of men ;
 And women as fair as thou art
 Must do such things now and then.

II

Thou only hast stepped unaware,—
 Malice, not one can impute ;
 And why should a heart have been
 there
 In the way of a fair woman's foot ?

III

It was not a stone that could trip,
 Nor was it a thorn that could rend :
 Put up thy proud under lip !
 'Twas merely the heart of a friend.

IV

And yet peradventure one day
 Thou, sitting alone at the glass,
 Remarking the bloom gone away,
 Where the smile in its dimplement
 was,

V

And seeking around thee in vain
 From hundreds who flattered be-
 fore,

Such a word as " Oh, not in the main
 Do I hold thee less precious, but
 more ! " . . .

VI

Thou'lt sigh, very like, on thy part,
 " Of all I have known or can know,
 I wish I had only that Heart
 I trod upon ages ago ! "

VOID IN LAW

I

SLEEP, little babe, on my knee,
 Sleep, for the midnight is chill,
 And the moon has died out in the
 tree,
 And the great human world goeth
 ill.
 Sleep, for the wicked agree :
 Sleep, let them do as they will.
 Sleep.

II

Sleep, thou hast drawn from my
 breast
 The last drop of milk that was good ;
 And now, in a dream, suck the rest,
 Lest the real should trouble thy
 blood.
 Suck, little lips dispossessed,
 As we kiss in the air whom we
 would.
 Sleep.

III

O lips of thy father ! the same,
 So like ! Very deeply they swore
 When he gave me his ring and his
 name,
 To take back, I imagined, no more !
 And now is all changed like a game,
 Though the old cards are used as of
 yore ?
 Sleep.

IV

" Void in law," said the Courts.
 Something wrong
 In the forms ? Yet, " Till death
 part us two,
 I, James, take thee, Jessie," was
 strong,
 And ONE witness competent. True
 Such a marriage was worth an old
 song,
 Heard in Heaven though, as plain
 as the New.
 Sleep.

V

Sleep, little child, his and mine !
 Her throat has the antelope curve,
 And her cheek just the colour and line
 Which fade not before him nor
 swerve :
 Yet *she* has no child !—the divine
 Seal of right upon loves that de-
 serve.

Sleep.

VI

My child ! though the world take her
 part,
 Saying, " She was the woman to
 choose,
 He had eyes, was a man in his
 heart,"—
 We twain the decision refuse :
 We . . . weak as I am, as thou art . . .
 Cling on to him, never to loose.
 Sleep.

VII

He thinks that, when done with this
 place,
 All's ended ? he'll new-stamp the
 ore ?
 Yes, Cæsar's—but not in our case.
 Let him learn we are waiting be-
 fore
 The grave's mouth, the heaven's gate,
 God's face,
 With implacable love evermore.
 Sleep.

VIII

He's ours, though he kissed her but
 now ;
 He's ours, though she kissed in
 reply ;
 He's ours, though himself disavow,
 And God's universe favour the lie ;
 Ours to claim, ours to clasp, ours
 below,
 Ours above . . . if we live, if we
 die.
 Sleep.

IX

Ah baby, my baby, too rough
 Is my lullaby ? What have I said ?
 Sleep ! When I've wept long enough
 I shall learn to weep softly instead,
 And piece with some alien stuff
 My heart to lie smooth for thy head.
 Sleep.

X

Two souls met upon thee, my sweet ;
 Two loves led thee out to the sun :
 Alas, pretty hands, pretty feet,
 If the one who remains (only one)
 Set her grief at thee, turned in a heat
 To thine enemy,—were it well done?
 Sleep.

XI

May He of the manger stand near
 And love thee ! An infant He came
 To His own who rejected Him here,
 But the Magi brought gifts all the
 same.
 I hurry the cross on my Dear !
 My gifts are the griefs I declaim !
 Sleep.

LORD WALTER'S WIFE

I

" But why do you go ? " said the lady,
 while both sate under the yew,
 And her eyes were alive in their depth,
 as the kraken beneath the sea-
 blue.

II

" Because I fear you," he answered ;—
 " because you are far too fair,
 And able to strangle my soul in a
 mesh of your gold-coloured hair."

III

" Oh, that," she said, " is no reason !
 Such knots are quickly undone,
 And too much beauty, I reckon, is
 nothing but too much sun."

IV

" Yet farewell so," he answered ;—
 " the sunstroke's fatal at times.
 I value your husband, Lord Walter,
 whose gallop rings still from the
 limes."

V

" Oh, that," she said, " is no reason.
 You smell a rose through a fence ;
 If two should smell it, what matter ?
 who grumbles, and where's the
 pretence ? "

VI

" But I," he replied, " have promised
 another, when love was free,
 To love her alone, alone, who alone
 and afar loves me."

VII

"Why, that," she said, "is no reason. Love's always free, I am told. Will you vow to be safe from the headache on Tuesday, and think it will hold?"

VIII

"But you," he replied, "have a daughter, a young little child, who was laid In your lap to be pure; so I leave you: the angels would make me afraid."

IX

"Oh, that," she said, "is no reason. The angels keep out of the way; And Dora, the child, observes nothing, although you should please me and stay."

X

At which he rose up in his anger,—
"Why, now, you no longer are fair!

Why, now, you no longer are fatal, but ugly and hateful, I swear."

XI

At which she laughed out in her scorn:
"These men! Oh, these men over nice,
Who are shocked if a colour not virtuous is frankly put on by a vice."

XII

Her eyes blazed upon him—"And you! You bring us your vices so near
That we smell them! You think in our presence a thought 'twould defame us to hear!

XIII

"What reason had you, and what right,—I appeal to your soul from my life,—
To find me too fair as a woman? Why, sir, I am pure, and a wife.

XIV

"Is the day-star too fair up above you? It burns you not. Dare you imply
I brushed you more close than the star does, when Walter had set me as high?

B. P.

XV

"If a man finds a woman too fair, he means simply adapted too much To uses unlawful and fatal. The praise!—shall I thank you for such?

XVI

"Too fair?—not unless you misuse us! and surely if, once in a while, You attain to it, straightway you call us no longer too fair, but too vile.

XVII

"A moment,—I pray your attention!
—I have a poor word in my head I must utter, though womanly custom would set it down better unsaid.

XVIII

"You grew, sir, pale to impertinence, once when I showed you a ring. You kissed my fan when I dropped it. No matter!—I've broken the thing.

XIX

"You did me the honour, perhaps, to be moved at my side now and then
In the senses—a vice, I have heard, which is common to beasts and some men.

XX

"Love's a virtue for heroes!—as white as the snow on high hills, And immortal as every great soul is that struggles, endures, and fulfils.

XXI

"I love my Walter profoundly,—you, Maud, though you faltered a week,
For the sake of . . . what was it? an eyebrow? or, less still, a mole on a cheek?

XXII

"And since, when all's said, you're too noble to stoop to the frivolous cant
About crimes irresistible, virtues that swindle, betray and supplant,

XXIII

"I determined to prove to yourself that, whate'er you might dream or avow
By illusion, you wanted precisely no more of me than you have now.

N N

XXIV

"There! Look me full in the face!
—in the face. Understand, if
you can,
That the eyes of such women as I am
are clean as the palm of a man.

XXV

"Drop his hand, you insult him.
Avoid us for fear we should cost
you a scar—
You take us for harlots, I tell you,
and not for the women we are.

XXVI

"You wronged me: but then I con-
sidered . . . there's Walter!
And so at the end
I vowed that he should not be mulcted,
by me, in the hand of a friend.

XXVII

"Have I hurt you indeed? We are
quits then. Nay, friend of my
Walter, be mine!
Come, Dora, my darling, my angel,
and help me to ask him to dine."

BIANCA AMONG THE NIGHTIN- GALES

I

THE cypress stood up like a church
That night we felt our love would
hold,
And saintly moonlight seemed to
search
And wash the whole world clean as
gold;
The olives crystallised the vales'
Broad slopes until the hills grew
strong:
The fireflies and the nightingales
Throbbled each to either, flame
and song.
The nightingales, the nightingales!

II

Upon the angle of its shade
The cypress stood, self-balanced
high;
Half up, half down, as double-made,
Along the ground, against the sky.
And *we*, too! from such soul-height
went
Such leaps of blood, so blindly
driven,
We scarce knew if our nature meant

Most passionate earth or intense
heaven.

The nightingales, the nightingales!

III

We paled with love, we shook with
love,

We kissed so close we could not vow;
Till Giulio whispered "Sweet, above
God's Ever guarantees this Now."
And through his words the nightin-
gales

Drove straight and full their long
clear call,

Like arrows through heroic mails,
And love was awful in it all.

The nightingales, the nightingales!

IV

O cold white moonlight of the north,
Refresh these pulses, quench this
hell!

O coverture of death drawn forth
Across this garden-chamber . . . well!
But what have nightingales to do
In gloomy England, called the
free . . .

(Yes, free to die in! . . .) when we
two

Are Sundered, singing still to me?
And still they sing, the nightingales!

V

I think I hear him, how he cried

"My own soul's life!" between
their notes.

Each man has but one soul supplied,
And that's immortal. Though his
throat's

On fire with passion now, to *her*

He can't say what to me he said!
And yet he moves *her*, they aver.

The nightingales sing through my
head,

The nightingales, the nightingales!

VI

He says to *her* what moves her most.

He would not name his soul within
Her hearing,—rather pays her cost

With praises to her lips and chin.
Man has but one soul, 'tis ordained,

And each soul but one love. I add;
Yet souls are damned and love's pro-
faned.

These nightingales will sing me
mad!

The nightingales, the nightingales!

VII

I marvel how the birds can sing.
There's little difference, in their
view,
Betwixt our Tuscan trees that spring
As vital flames into the blue,
And dull round blots of foliage meant,
Like saturated sponges here
To suck the fogs up. As content
Is *he* too in this land, 'tis clear.
And still they sing, the nightingales.

VIII

My native Florence! dear, forgone!
I see across the Alpine ridge
How the last feast-day of Saint John
Shot rockets from Carrara bridge.
The luminous city, tall with fire,
Trode deep down in that river of
ours,

While many a boat with lamp and
choir
Skimmed birdlike over glittering
towers.
I will not hear these nightingales.

IX

I seem to float, *we* seem to float
Down Arno's stream in festive
guise;
A boat strikes flame into our boat,
And up that lady seems to rise
As then she rose. The shock had
flashed
A vision on us! What a head,
What leaping eyeballs!—beauty
dashed
To splendour by a sudden dread.
And still they sing, the nightingales.

X

Too bold to sin, too weak to die;
Such women are so. As for me,
I would we had drowned there, he and
I,
That moment, loving perfectly.
He had not caught her with her loosed
Gold ringlets . . . rarer in the
south . . .
Nor heard the "Grazie tanto" bruise
To sweetness by her English mouth.
And still they sing, the nightingales.

XI

She had not reached him at my heart
With her fine tongue, as snakes
indeed
Kill flies; nor had I, for my part,

Yearned after, in my desperate
need,
And followed him as he did her
To coasts left bitter by the tide,
Whose very nightingales, elsewhere
Delighting, torture and deride!
For still they sing, the nightingales.

XII

A worthless woman; mere cold clay
As all false things are! but so fair,
She takes the breath of men away
Who gaze upon her unaware.
I would not play her larcenous tricks
To have her looks! She lied and
stole,
And spat into my love's pure pyx
The rank saliva of her soul.
And still they sing, the nightingales.

XIII

I would not for her white and pink,
Though such he likes—her grace of
limb,
Though such he has praised—nor yet,
I think,
For life itself, though spent with
him,
Commit such sacrilege, affront
God's nature which is love, intrude
Twixt two affianced souls, and hunt
Like spiders, in the altar's wood.
I cannot bear these nightingales.

XIV

If she chose sin, some gentler guise
She might have sinned in, so it
seems:
She might have pricked out both my
eyes,
And I still seen him in my dreams!
—Or drugged me in my soup or wine,
Nor left me angry afterward:
To die here with his hand in mine,
His breath upon me, were not hard.
(Our Lady hush these nightingales!)

XV

But set a springe for *him*, "mio ben,"
My only good, my first last love!—
Though Christ knows well what sin is,
when
He sees some things done they
must move
Himself to wonder. Let her pass.
I think of her by night and day.
Must I too join her . . . out, alas! . . .
With Giulio, in each word I say?
And evermore the nightingales!

XVI

Giulio, my Giulio!—sing they so,
 And you be silent? Do I speak,
 And you not hear? An arm you
 throw
 Round some one, and I feel so
 weak?
 --Oh, owl-like birds! They sing for
 spite,
 They sing for hate, they sing for
 doom!
 They'll sing through death who sing
 through night,
 They'll sing and stun me in the
 tomb—
 The nightingales, the nightingales!

MY KATE

I

SHE was not as pretty as women I
 know,
 And yet all your best made of sun-
 shine and snow
 Drop to shade, melt to nought in the
 long-trodden ways,
 While she's still remembered on warm
 and cold days—

My Kate.

II

Her air had a meaning, her move-
 ments a grace;
 You turned from the fairest to gaze
 on her face:
 And when you had once seen her
 forehead and mouth,
 You saw as distinctly her soul and
 her truth—

My Kate.

III

Such a blue inner light from her eye-
 lids outbroke,
 You looked at her silence and fancied
 she spoke:
 When she did, so peculiar yet soft
 was the tone,
 Though the loudest spoke also, you
 heard her alone—

My Kate.

IV

I doubt if she said to you much that
 could act
 As a thought or suggestion: she did
 not attract
 In the sense of the brilliant or wise: I
 infer

'Twas her thinking of others made
 you think of her—

My Kate.

V

She never found fault with you, never
 implied
 Your wrong by her right; and yet
 men at her side
 Grew nobler, girls purer, as through
 the whole town
 The children were gladder that pulled
 at her gown—

My Kate.

VI

None knelt at her feet confessed
 lovers in thrall;
 They knelt more to God than they
 used,—that was all:
 If you praised her as charming, some
 asked what you meant,
 But the charm of her presence was
 felt when she went—

My Kate.

VII

The weak and the gentle, the ribald
 and rude,
 She took as she found them, and did
 them all good;
 It always was so with her—see what
 you have!
 She has made the grass greener even
 here . . . with her grave—

My Kate.

VIII

My dear one!—when thou wast alive
 with the rest,
 I held thee the sweetest and loved
 thee the best:
 And now thou art dead, shall I not
 take thy part
 As thy smiles used to do for thyself,
 my sweet Heart—

My Kate?

A SONG FOR THE RAGGED
SCHOOLS OF LONDON

WRITTEN IN ROME

I

I AM listening here in Rome.
 "England's strong," say many
 speakers,
 "If she winks, the Czar must come,
 Prow and topsail, to the breakers."

II

"England's rich in coal and oak,"
 Adds a Roman, getting moody,
 "If she shakes a travelling cloak,
 Down our Appian roll the scudi."

III

"England's righteous," they rejoin,
 "Who shall grudge her exaltations,
 When her wealth of golden coin
 Works the welfare of the nations?"

IV

I am listening here in Rome.
 Over Alps a voice is sweeping—
 "England's cruel! save us some
 Of these victims in her keeping!"

V

As the cry beneath the wheel
 Of an old triumphal Roman
 Cleft the people's shouts like steel,
 While the show was spoilt for no
 man,

VI

Comes that voice. Let others shout,
 Other poets praise my land here :
 I am sadly sitting out,
 Praying, "God forgive her grand-
 eur."

VII

Shall we boast of empire, where
 Time with ruin sits commissioned?
 In God's liberal blue air
 Peter's dome itself looks wizened;

VIII

And the mountains, in disdain,
 Gather back their lights of opal
 From the dumb, despondent plain,
 Heaped with jawbones of a people.

IX

Lordly English, think it o'er,
 Cæsar's doing is all undone!
 You have cannons on your shore,
 And free Parliaments in London,

X

Princes' parks, and merchants' homes,
 Tents for soldiers, ships for sea-
 men,—
 Ay, but ruins worse than Rome's
 In your pauper men and women.

XI

Women leering through the gas
 (Just such bosoms used to nurse
 you),

Men, turned wolves by famine—pass!
 Those can speak themselves, and
 curse you.

XII

But these others—children small,
 Spilt like blots about the city,
 Quay, and street, and palace-wall—
 Take them up into your pity!

XIII

Ragged children with bare feet,
 Whom the angels in white raiment
 Know the names of, to repeat
 When they come on you for pay-
 ment.

XIV

Ragged children, hungry-eyed,
 Huddled up out of the coldness
 On your doorsteps, side by side,
 Till your footman damns their
 boldness.

XV

In the alleys, in the squares,
 Begging, lying little rebels;
 In the noisy thoroughfares,
 Struggling on with piteous trebles.

XVI

Patient children—think what pain
 Makes a young child patient—
 ponder!
 Wronged too commonly to strain
 After right, or wish, or wonder.

XVII

Wicked children, with peaked chins,
 And old foreheads! there are many
 With no pleasures except sins,
 Gambling with a stolen penny.

XVIII

Sickly children, that whine low
 To themselves and not their
 mothers,
 From mere habit,—never so
 Hoping help or care from others.

XIX

Healthy children, with those blue
 English eyes, fresh from their
 Maker,
 Pierce and ravenous, staring through
 At the brown loaves of the baker.

XX

I am listening here in Rome,
 And the Romans are confessing,
 "English children pass in bloom
 All the prettiest made for blessing.

XXI

"*Angli angeli!*" (resumed
From the mediæval story)
"Such rose angelhoods, emblumed
In such ringlets of pure glory!"

XXII

Can we smooth down the bright hair,
O my sisters, calm, unthrilled in
Our heart's pulses? Can we bear
The sweet looks of our own children,

XXIII

While those others, lean and small,
Scurf and mildew of the city,
Spot our streets, convict us all
Till we take them into pity?

XXIV

"Is it our fault?" you reply,
"When, throughout civilisation,
Every nation's empery
Is asserted by starvation?"

XXV

"All these mouths we cannot feed,
And we cannot clothe these bodies."
Well, if man's so hard indeed,
Let them learn at least what God
is!

XXVI

Little outcasts from life's fold,
The grave's hope they may be
joined in,
By Christ's covenant consoled
For our social contract's grinding.

XXVII

If no better can be done,
Let us do but this,—endeavour
That the sun behind the sun
Shine upon them while they shiver!

XXVIII

On the dismal London flags,
Through the cruel social juggle,
Put a thought beneath their rags
To ennoble the heart's struggle.

XXIX

O my sisters, not so much
Are we asked for—not a blossom
From our children's nosegay, such
As we gave it from our bosom,—

XXX

Not the milk left in their cup,
Not the lamp while they are sleep-
ing,
Not the little cloak hung up
While the coat's in daily keeping,—

XXXI

But a place in RAGGED SCHOOLS,
Where the outcasts may to-morrow
Learn by gentle words and rules
Just the uses of their sorrow.

XXXII

O my sisters! children small,
Blue-eyed, wailing through the
city—
Our own babes cry in them all:
Let us take them into pity.

MAY'S LOVE

I

You love all, you say,
Round, beneath, above me:
Find me then some way
Better than to love me,
Me, too, dearest May!

II

O world-kissing eyes
Which the blue heavens melt to!
I, sad, overwise,
Loathe the sweet looks dealt to
All things—men and flies.

III

You love all, you say:
Therefore, Dear, abate me
Just your love, I pray!
Shut your eyes and hate me—
Only me—fair May!

AMY'S CRUELTY

I

FAIR Amy of the terraced house,
Assist me to discover
Why you who would not hurt a mouse
Can torture so your lover.

II

You give your coffee to the cat,
You stroke the dog for coming,
And all your face grows kinder at
The little brown bee's humming.

III

But when *he* haunts your door . . .
the town
Marks coming and marks going . . .
You seem to have stitched your eye-
lids down
To that long piece of sewing!

IV

You never give a look, not you,
Nor drop him a "Good morning,"

To keep his long day warm and blue,
So fretted by your scorning.

V

She shook her head—"The mouse
and bee

For crumb or flower will linger :
The dog is happy at my knee,
The cat purrs at my finger.

VI

"But *he* . . . to *him*, the least thing
given

Means great things at a distance ;
He wants my world, my sun, my
heaven,
Soul, body, whole existence.

VII

"They say love gives as well as
takes ;

But I'm a simple maiden,—
My mother's first smile when she
wakes
I still have smiled and prayed in.

VIII

"I only know my mother's love
Which gives all and asks nothing ;
And this new loving sets the groove
Too much the way of loathing.

IX

"Unless he gives me all in change,
I forfeit all things by him :
The risk is terrible and strange—
I tremble, doubt . . . deny him.

X

"He's sweetest friend, or hardest foe,
Best angel, or worst devil ;
I either hate or . . . love him so,
I can't be merely civil !

XI

"You trust a woman who puts forth
Her blossoms thick as summer's ?
You think she dreams what love is
worth,
Who casts it to new-comers ?

XII

"Such love's a cowslip-ball to fling,
A moment's pretty pastime ;
I give . . . all me, if anything,
The first time and the last time.

XIII

"Dear neighbour of the trellised
house,
A man should murmur never,

Though treated worse than dog and
mouse,
Till doted on for ever ! "

MY HEART AND I

I

ENOUGH ! we're tired, my heart and I.
We sit beside the headstone thus,
And wish that name were carved
for us.

The moss reprints more tenderly
The hard types of the mason's
knife,
As heaven's sweet life renews
earth's life
With which we're tired, my heart and
I.

II

You see we're tired, my heart and I.
We dealt with books, we trusted
men,
And in our own blood drenched the
pen,

As if such colours could not fly.
We walked too straight for for-
tune's end,
We loved too true to keep a friend ;
At last we're tired, my heart and I.

III

How tired we feel, my heart and I !
We seem of no use in the world ;
Our fancies hang grey and uncured
About men's eyes indifferently ;
Our voice which thrilled you so,
will let

You sleep ; our tears are only wet :
What do we here, my heart and I ?

IV

So tired, so tired, my heart and I !
It was not thus in that old time
When Ralph sat with me 'neath
the lime

To watch the sunset from the sky.
"Dear love, you're looking tired,"
he said ;

I, smiling at him, shook my head :
'Tis now we're tired, my heart and I.

V

So tired, so tired, my heart and I !
Though now none takes me on his
arm
To fold me close and kiss me warm
Till each quick breath end in a sigh

Of happy languor. Now, alone,
We lean upon this graveyard stone,
Uncheered, unloved, my heart and I.

VI

Tired out we are, my heart and I.
Suppose the world brought diadems
To tempt us, crusted with loose
gems
Of powers and pleasures? Let it try.
We scarcely care to look at even
A pretty child, or God's blue
heaven,
We feel so tired, my heart and I.

VII

Yet who complains? My heart and
I?
In this abundant earth no doubt
Is little room for things worn out:
Disdain them, break them, throw
them by
And if before the days grew rough
We *once* were loved, used,—well
enough,
I think, we've fared, my heart and I.

THE BEST THING IN THE
WORLD

What's the best thing in the world?
June rose, by May dew imperaled;
Sweet south wind, that means no
rain;
Truth, not cruel to a friend;
Pleasure, not in haste to end;
Beauty, not self-decked and curled
Till its pride is over plain;
Light, that never makes you wink;
Memory, that gives no pain;
Love, when, *so*, you're loved again.
What's the best thing in the world?
—Something out of it, I think.

WHERE'S AGNES?

I

NAY, if I had come back so,
And found her dead in her grave,
And if a friend I know
Had said, "Be strong, nor rave:
She lies there, dead below:

II

"I saw her, I who speak,
White, stiff, the face one blank:
The blue shade came to her cheek
Before they nailed the plank,
For she had been dead a week."

III

Why, if he had spoken so,
I might have believed the thing,
Although her look, although
Her step, laugh, voice's ring
Lived in me still as they do.

IV

But dead that other way,
Corrupted thus and lost?
That sort of worm in the clay?
I cannot count the cost,
That I should rise and pay.

V

My Agnes false? such shame?
She? Rather be it said
That the pure saint of her name
Has stood there in her stead,
And tricked you to this blame.

VI

Her very gown, her cloak
Fell chastely: no disguise,
But expression! while she broke
With her clear grey morning-eyes
Full upon me and then spoke.

VII

She wore her hair away
From her forehead,—like a cloud
Which a little wind in May
Peels off finely: disallowed
Though bright enough to stay.

VIII

For the heavens must have the place
To themselves, to use and shine in,
As her soul would have her face
To press through upon mine, in
That orb of angel grace.

IX

Had she any fault at all,
'Twas having none, I thought too—
There seemed a sort of thrall;
As she felt her shadow ought to
Fall straight upon the wall.

X

Her sweetness strained the sense
Of common life and duty;
And every day's expense
Of moving in such beauty
Required, almost, defence.

XI

What good, I thought, is done
By such sweet things, if any?
This world smells ill i' the sun

Though the garden-flowers are
many,—
She is only one.

XXII

Can a voice so low and soft
Take open actual part
With Right,—maintain aloft
Pure truth in life or art,
Vexed always, wounded oft?—

XIII

She fit, with that fair pose
Which melts from curve to curve,
To stand, run, work with those
Who wrestle and deserve,
And speak plain without gloze?

XIV

But I turned round on my fear
Defiant, disagreeing—
What if God has set her here
Less for action than for Being?—
For the eye and for the ear.

XV

Just to show what beauty may,
Just to prove what music can,—
And then to die away
From the presence of a man,
Who shall learn, henceforth, to pray?

XVI

As a door, left half ajar
In heaven, would make him think
How heavenly-different are
Things glanced at through the
chink,
Till he pined from near to far.

XVII

That door could lead to hell?
That shining merely meant
Damnation? What! *She* fell
•Like a woman, who was sent
Like an angel, by a spell?

XVIII

She, who scarcely trod the earth,
Turned mere dirt? My Agnes,—
mine!
Called so! felt of too much worth
To be used so! too divine
To be breathed near, and so forth!

XIX

Why, I dared not name a sin
In her presence: I went round,
Clipped its name and shut it in
Some mysterious crystal sound,—
Changed the dagger for the pin.

XX

Now you name herself *that word*?
O my Agnes! O my saint!
Then the great joys of the Lord
Do not last? Then all this paint
Runs off nature? leaves a board?

XXI

Who's dead here? No, not she:
Rather I! or whence this damp
Cold corruption's misery?
While my very mourners stamp
Closer in the clods on me.

XXII

And my mouth is full of dust
Till I cannot speak and curse—
Speak and damn him . . . "Blame's
unjust"?

Sin blots out the universe,
All because, *she* would and must?

XXIII

She, my white rose, dropping off
The high rose tree branch! and not
That the night wind blew too rough,
Or the noon sun burnt too hot,
But, that being a rose—'twas enough!

XXIV

Then henceforth, may earth grow
trees!
No more roses!—hard straight
lines
To score lies out! none of these
Fluctuant curves, but firs and
pines,
Poplars, cedars, cypresses!

DE PROFUNDIS

I

THE face which, duly as the sun,
Rose up for me with life begun,
To mark all bright hours of the day
With hourly love, is dimmed away,—
And yet my days go on, go on.

II

The tongue which, like a stream,
could run
Smooth music from the roughest
stone,
And every morning with "Good day"
Make each day good, is hushed away,—
And yet my days go on, go on.

III

The heart which, like a staff, was one
For mine to lean and rest upon,
The strongest on the longest day

With steadfast love, is caught away,—
And yet my days go on, go on.

IV

And cold before my summer's done,
And deaf in Nature's general tune,
And fallen too low for special fear,
And here, with hope no longer here,—
While the tears drop, my days go on.

V

The world goes whispering to its own,
"This anguish pierces to the bone;"
And tender friends go sighing round,
"What love can ever cure this
wound?"

My days go on, my days go on.

VI

The past rolls forward on the sun
And makes all night. O dreams be-
gun,

Not to be ended! Ended bliss,
And life that will not end in this!
My days go on, my days go on.

VII

Breath freezes on my lips to moan:
As one alone, once not alone,
I sit and knock at Nature's door,
Heart-bare, heart-hungry, very poor,
Whose desolated days go on.

VIII

I knock and cry,—Undone, undone!
Is there no help, no comfort,—none?
No gleanings in the wide wheat-plains
Where others drive their loaded
wains?

My vacant days go on, go on.

IX

This Nature, though the snows be
down,

Thinks kindly of the bird of June:
The little red hip on the tree
Is ripe for such. What is for me,
Whose days so winterly go on?

X

No bird am I, to sing in June,
And dare not ask an equal boon.
Good nests and berries red are Na-
ture's

To give away to better creatures,—
And yet my days go on, go on.

XI

I ask less kindness to be done,—
Only to loose these pilgrim-shoon,
(Too early worn and grimed) with
sweet

Cool deathly touch to these tired feet,
Till days go out which now go on.

XII

Only to lift the turf unmown
From off the earth where it has grown,
Some cubit-space, and say "Behold,
Creep in, poor Heart, beneath that
fold,

Forgetting how the days go on."

XIII

What harm would that do? Green
anon

The sward would quicken, overshone
By skies as blue; and crickets might
Have leave to chirp there day and
night

While my new rest went on, went on.

XIV

From gracious Nature have I won
Such liberal bounty? may I run
So, lizard-like, within her side,
And there be safe, who now am tried
By days that painfully go on?

XV

—A Voice reproves me thereupon,
More sweet than Nature's when the
drone

Of bees is sweetest, and more deep
Than when the rivers overleap
The shuddering pines, and thunder on

XVI

God's Voice, not Nature's! Night
and noon

He sits upon the great white throne
And listens for the creatures' praise.
What babble we of days and days?
The Day-spring He, whose days go
on.

XVII

He reigns above, He reigns alone;
Systems burn out and leave His
throne:

Fair mists of seraphs melt and fall
Around Him, changeless amid all,—
Ancient of Days, whose days go on.

XVIII

He reigns below, He reigns alone,
And, having life in love forgone
Beneath the crown of sovran thorns,
He reigns the Jealous God. Who
mourns

Or rules with Him, while days go on?

XIX

By anguish which made pale the sun,
I hear Him charge His saints that
none

Among His creatures anywhere
Blaspheme against Him with despair,
However darkly days go on.

XX

Take from my head the thorn-wreath
brown !

No mortal grief deserves that crown.
O supreme Love, chief misery,
The sharp regalia are for THEE
Whose days eternally go on !

XXI

For us,—whatever's undergone,
Thou knowest, willest what is done.
Grief may be joy misunderstood ;
Only the Good discerns the good.
I trust Thee while my days go on.

XXII

Whatever's lost, it first was won :
We will not struggle nor impugn.
Perhaps the cup was broken here,
That Heaven's new wine might show
more clear.

I praise Thee while my days go on.

XXIII

I praise Thee while my days go on ;
I love Thee while my days go on :
Through dark and dearth, through
fire and frost,

With emptied arms and treasure lost,
I thank Thee while my days go on.

XXIV

And having in Thy life-depth thrown
Being and suffering (which are one),
As a child drops his pebble small
Down some deep well, and hears it fall
Smiling—so I. THY DAYS GO ON.

A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

I

WHAT was he doing, the great god
Pan,

Down in the reeds by the river ?
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of
a goat,

And breaking the golden lilies afloat
With the dragon-fly on the river.

II

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,
From the deep cool bed of the river :

The limpid water turbidly ran,
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,
And the dragon-fly had fled away,
Ere he brought it out of the river.

III

High on the shore sat the great god
Pan

While turbidly flowed the river ;
And hacked and hewed as a great god
can,

With his hard bleak steel at the
patient reed,
Till there was not a sign of the leaf
indeed

To prove it fresh from the river.

IV

He cut it short, did the great god Pan,
(How tall it stood in the river !)
Then drew the pith, like the heart of
a man,

Steadily from the outside ring,
And notched the poor dry empty
thing

In holes, as he sat by the river.

V

" This is the way," laughed the great
god Pan

(Laughed while he sat by the river),
" The only way, since gods began
To make sweet music, they could suc-
ceed."

Then, dropping his mouth to a hole
in the reed,

He blew in power by the river.

VI

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan !

Piercing sweet by the river !
Blinding sweet, O great god Pan !
The sun on the hill forgot to die,
And the lilies revived, and the dragon-
fly

Came back to dream on the river.

VII

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,
To laugh as he sits by the river,
Making a poet out of a man :

The true gods sigh for the cost and
pain,—
For the reed which grows nevermore
again

As a reed with the reeds in the
river.

FIRST NEWS FROM VILLA-FRANCA

I

Peace, peace, peace, do you say ?
 What !—with the enemy's guns in
 our ears ?
 With the country's wrong not rendered
 back ?
 What !—while Austria stands at bay
 In Mantua, and our Venice bears
 The cursed flag of the yellow and
 black ?

II

Peace, peace, peace, do you say ?
 And this the Mincio ? Where's the
 fleet,
 And where's the sea ? Are we all
 blind
 Or mad with the blood shed yesterday,
 Ignoring Italy under our feet,
 And seeing things before, behind ?

III

Peace, peace, peace, do you say ?
 What !—uncontested, undenied ?
 Because we triumph, we succumb ?
 A pair of Emperors stand in the way
 (One of whom is a man, beside),
 To sign and seal our cannons dumb ?

IV

No, not Napoleon !—he who mused
 At Paris, and at Milan spake,
 And at Solferino led the fight :
 Not he we trusted, honoured, used
 Our hopes and hearts for . . . till
 they break—
 Even so, you tell us . . . in his
 sight.

V

Peace, peace, is still your word ?
We say you lie then !—that is plain.
 There *is* no peace, and shall be
 none.

Our very Dead would cry " Absurd !"
 And clamour that they died in vain,
 And whine to come back to the sun.

VI

Hush ! more reverence for the Dead !
They've done the most for Italy
 Evermore since the earth was fair.
 Now would that *we* had died instead,
 Still dreaming peace meant liberty,
 And did not, could not mean
 despair.

VII

Peace, you say ?—yes, peace, in
 truth !

But such a peace as the ear can
 achieve
 'Twixt the rifle's click and the rush
 of the ball,
 'Twixt the tiger's spring and the
 crunch of the tooth,
 'Twixt the dying atheist's negative
 And God's Face—waiting, after all

KING VICTOR EMANUEL
 ENTERING FLORENCE, APRIL,
 1860

I

KING of us all, we cried to thee, cried
 to thee,
 Trampled to earth by the beasts
 impure,
 Dragged by the chariots which
 shame as they roll :
 The dust of our torment far and wide
 to thee
 Went up, dark'ning thy royal soul.
 Be witness, Cavour,
 That the King was sad for the people
 in thrall,
 This King of us all !

II

King, we cried to thee ! Strong in
 replying,
 Thy word and thy sword sprang
 rapid and sure,
 Cleaving our way to a nation's
 place.
 Oh, first soldier of Italy !—crying
 Now grateful, exultant, we look in
 thy face.
 Be witness, Cavour,
 That, freedom's first soldier, the
 freed should call
 First King of them all !

III

This is our beautiful Italy's birthday ;
 High-thoughted souls, whether
 many or fewer,
 Bring her the gift, and wish her
 the good,
 While Heaven presents on this sunny
 earth-day
 The noble King to the land re-
 newed :
 Be witness, Cavour !

Roar, cannon-mouths ! Proclaim, install

The King of us all !

IV

Grave he rides through the Florence gateway,

Clenching his face into calm, to immure

His struggling heart till it half disappears ;

If he relaxed for a moment, straightway

He would break out into passionate tears—

(Be witness, Cavour !)

While rings the cry without interval,

" Live, King of us all ! "

V

Cry, free peoples ! Honour the nation

By crowning the true man—and none is truer :

Pisa is here, and Livorno is here,

And thousands of faces, in wild exultation,

Burn over the windows to feel him near—

(Be witness, Cavour !)

Burn over from terrace, roof, window and wall,

On this King of us all.

VI

Grave ! A good man's ever the graver

For bearing a nation's trust secure ; And *he*, he thinks of the Heart, beside,

Which broke for Italy, failing to save her,

And pining away by Oporto's tide : Be witness, Cavour,

That he thinks of his vow on that royal pall,

This King of us all.

VII

Flowers, flowers, from the flowery city !

Such innocent thanks for a deed so pure,

As, melting away for joy into flowers,

The nation invites him to enter his Pitti

And evermore reign in this Florence of ours.

Be witness, Cavour !

He'll stand where the reptiles were used to crawl,

This King of us all.

VIII

Grave, as the manner of noble men is—Deeds unfinished will weigh on the doer :

And, baring his head to those crape-veiled flags,

He bows to the grief of the South and Venice.

Oh, riddle the last of the yellow to rags,

And swear by Cavour

That the King shall reign where the tyrants fall,

True King of us all !

THE SWORD OF CASTRUCCIO CASTRACANI

' Questa è per me.'—KING VICTOR EMANUEL

I

WHEN Victor Emanuel the King

Went down to his Lucca that day,

The people, each vaunting the thing As he gave it, gave all things away,—

In a burst of fierce gratitude, say,

As they tore out their hearts for the King.

II

—Gave the green forest-walk on the wall,

With the Apennine blue through the trees ;

Gave the palaces, churches, and all The great pictures which burn out of these :

But the eyes of the King seemed to freeze

As he gazed upon ceiling and wall.

III

" Good," said the King as he passed. Was he cold to the arts ?—or else

coy

To possession ? or crossed, at the last (Whispered some), by the vote in

Savoy ?

Shout ! Love him enough for his joy !

" Good," said the King as he passed.

IV

He, travelling the whole day through
flowers
And protesting amenities, found
At Pistoia, betwixt the two showers
Of red roses, the "Orphans" (re-
nowned
As the heirs of Puccini) who
wound
With a sword through the crowd and
the flowers.

V

" 'Tis the sword of Castruccio, O
King,—
In that strife of intestinal hate,
Very famous! Accept what we
bring,
We who cannot be sons, by our fate,
Rendered citizens by thee of late,
And endowed with a country and
king.

VI

" Read! Puccini has willed that this
sword
(Which once made in an ignorant
feud
Many orphans) remain in our ward
Till some patriot its pure civic
blood
Wipe away in the foe's and make
good,
In delivering the land by the sword."

VII

Then the King exclaimed " This is
for me! "
And he dashed out his hand on the
hilt,
While his blue eye shot fire openly,
And his heart overboiled till it spilt
A hot prayer,—" God! the rest as
Thou wilt!
But grant me this!—*This is for me.*"

VIII

O Victor Emanuel, the King,
The sword be for *thee*, and the deed,
And nought for the alien, next spring,
Nought for Hapsburg and Bourbon
agreed—
But, for us, a great Italy freed,
With a hero to head us,—our King!

SUMMING UP IN ITALY

(INSCRIBED TO INTELLIGENT PUBLICS
OUT OF IT.)

I

OBSERVE how it will be at last,
When our Italy stands at full
stature,
A year ago tied down so fast
That the cord cut the quick of her
nature!
You'll honour the deed and its scope,
Then, in logical sequence upon it,
Will use up the remnants of rope
By hanging the men who have done
it.

II

The speech in the Commons, which
hits you
A sketch off, how dungeons must
feel,—
The official despatch, which commits
you
From stamping out groans with
your heel,—
Suggestions in journal or book for
Good efforts,—are praised as is
meet:
But what in this world can men look
for,
Who only achieve and complete?

III

True, you've praise for the fireman
who sets his
Brave face to the axe of the flame,
Disappears in the smoke, and then
fetches
A babe down, 'or idiot that's lame,—
For the boor even, who rescues
through pity
A sheep from the brute who would
kick it:
But saviours of nations!—'tis pretty,
And doubtful: they *may* be so
wicked:

IV

Azeglio, Farini, Mamiani,
Ricasoli,—doubt by the dozen!—
here's
Pepoli too, and Cipriani,
Imperial cousins and cozeners—
Arese, Laiatico,—courtly
Of manners, if stringent of mouth:
Garibaldi! we'll come to him shortly
(As soon as he *ends* in the South).

V

Napoleon—as strong as ten armies,
Corrupt as seven devils—a fact
You accede to, then seek where the
harm is
Drained off from the man to his act,
And find—a free nation! Suppose
Some hell-brood in Eden's sweet
greenery,
Convoked for creating—a rose!
Would it suit the infernal machi-
nery?

VI

Cavour,—to the despot's desire,
Who his own thought so craftily
marries—
What is he but just a thin wire
For conducting the lightning from
Paris?
Yes, write down the two as compeers,
Confessing (you would not permit a
lie)
He bore up his Piedmont ten years
Till she suddenly smiled and was
Italy.

VII

And the King, with that "stain on his
scutcheon,"¹
Savoy—as the calumny runs;
(If it be not his blood,—with his
clutch on
The sword, and his face to the
guns.)
O first, where the battle-storm
gathers,
O loyal of heart on the throne,
Let those keep the "graves of their
fathers,"
Who quail, in a nerve, from their
own!

VIII

For *thee*—through the dim Hades-
portal
The dream of a voice—"Blessed
thou
Who hast made all thy race twice
immortal!
No need of the sepulchres now!
—Left to Bourbons and Hapsburgs,
who fester
Above-ground with worm-eaten
souls,
While the ghost of some pale feudal
jester

Before them strews treaties in
holes."

IX

But hush!—am I dreaming a poem
Of Hades, Heaven, Justice? Not
I—
I began too far off, in my proem,
With what men believe and deny:
And on earth, whatsoever the need is
(To sum up as thoughtful re-
viewers),
The moral of every great deed is—
The virtue of slandering the doers.

"DIED . . ."

("The Times" Obituary)

I

WHAT shall we add now? He is
dead.
And I who praise and you who
blame,
With wash of words across his
name,
Find suddenly declared instead—
"On Sunday, third of August, dead."

II

Which stops the whole we talked to-
day.
I, quickened to a plausible glance
At his large general tolerance
By common people's narrow way,
Stopped short in praising. Dead,
they say.

III

And you, who had just put in a sort
Of cold deduction—"rather, large
Through weakness of the continent
marge,
Than greatness of the thing con-
tained"—
Broke off. Dead!—there, you stood
restrained.

IV

As if we had talked in following one
Up some long gallery. "Would
you choose
An air like that? The gait is
loose—
Or noble." Sudden in the sun
An oubliette winks. Where is he?
Gone.

¹ Blue Book: Diplomatical Correspondence.

v

Dead. Man's "I was" by God's
"I am"—

All hero-worship comes to that.
High heart, high thought, high
fame, as flat

As a gravestone. Bring your *Jacet*
jam—

The epitaph's an epigram.

vi

Dead. There's an answer to arrest
All carping. Dust's his natural
place?

He'll let the flies buzz round his
face

And, though you slander, not protest?
—From such an one, exact the Best?

vii

Opinions gold or brass are null.
We chuck our flattery or abuse,
Called Cæsar's due, as Charon's
dues,

I' the teeth of some dead sage or fool,
To mend the grinning of a skull.

viii

Be abstinent in praise and blame.
The man's still mortal, who stands
first,

And mortal only, if last and worst.
Then slowly lift so frail a fame,
Or softly drop so poor a shame.

THE FORCED RECRUIT

(SOLFERINO, 1859)

i

In the ranks of the Austrian you
found him,

He died with his face to you all;
Yet bury him here where around him
You honour your bravest that fall.

ii

Venetian, fair-featured and slender,
He lies shot to death in his youth,
With a smile on his lips over-tender
For any mere soldier's dead mouth.

iii

No stranger, and yet not a traitor,
Though alien the cloth on his breast,
Underneath it how seldom a greater
Young heart has a shot sent to rest!

iv

By your enemy tortured and goaded

To march with them, stand in their
file,
His musket (see) never was loaded,
He facing your guns with that
smile!

v

As orphans yearn on to their mothers.
He yearned to your patriot bands;—
"Let me die for our Italy, brothers,
If not in your ranks, by your
hands!"

vi

"Aim straightly, fire steadily! spare
me
A ball in the body which may
Deliver my heart here, and tear me
This badge of the Austrian away!"

vii

So thought he, so died he this morn-
ing.
What then? many others have
died.
Ay, but easy for men to die scorning
The death-stroke, who fought side
by side—

viii

One tricolor floating above them;
Struck down 'mid triumphant ac-
claims
Of an Italy rescued to love them
And blazon the brass with their
names.

ix

But he,—without witness or honour,
Mixed, shamed in his country's
regard,
With the tyrants who march in upon
her,
Died faithful and passive: 'twas
hard.

x

'Twas sublime. In a cruel restriction
Cut off from the guerdon of sons,
With most filial obedience, conviction,
His soul kissed the lips of her guns.

xi

That moves you? Nay, grudge not
to show it,
While digging a grave for him
here:
The others who died, says your poet,
Have glory,—*let him* have a tear.

GARIBALDI

I

He bent his head upon his breast
 Wherein his lion-heart lay sick :—
 " Perhaps we are not ill-repaid ;"
 Perhaps this is not a true test ;
 Perhaps this was not a foul trick ;
 Perhaps none wronged, and none
 betrayed.

II

" Perhaps the people's vote which
 here
 United, there may disunite,
 And both be lawful as they think ;
 Perhaps a patriot, statesman, dear
 For chartering nations, can with
 right
 Disfranchise those who hold the
 ink.

III

" Perhaps men's wisdom is not craft ;
 Men's greatness, not a selfish greed ;
 Men's justice, not the safer side ;
 Perhaps even women, when they
 laughed,

Wept, thanked us that the land
 was freed,
 Not wholly (though they kissed us)
 lied.

IV

" Perhaps no more than this we
 meant,
 When up at Austria's guns we flew,
 And quenched them with a cry
 apiece,
Italia!—Yet a dream was sent . . .
 The little house my father knew,
 The olives and the palms of Nice."

V

He paused, and drew his sword out
 slow,
 Then pored upon the blade intent,
 As if to read some written thing ;
 While many murmured,—“ He will
 go
 In that despairing sentiment
 And break his sword before the
 King.”

VI

He poring still upon the blade,
 His large lid quivered, something
 fell.
 “ Perhaps,” he said, “ I was not
 born

B. P.

With such fine brains to treat and
 trade,—

And if a woman knew it well,
 Her falsehood only meant her scorn.

VII

" Yet through Varese's cannon-
 smoke
 My eye saw clear : men feared this
 man

At Como, where this sword could
 seal

Death's protocol with every stroke :
 And now . . . the drop there
 scarcely can
 Impair the keenness of the steel.

VIII

" So man and sword may have their
 use ;
 And if the soil beneath my foot
 In valour's act is forfeited,
 I'll strike the harder, take my dues
 Out nobler, and all loss confute
 From ampler heavens above my
 head.

IX

" My King, King Victor, I am thine !
 So much Nice-dust as what I am
 (To make our Italy) must cleave.
 Forgive that.” Forward with a sign
 He went.

You've seen the telegram ?
Palermo's taken, we believe.

ONLY A CURL

I

FRIENDS of faces unknown and a land
 Unvisited over the sea,
 Who tell me how lonely you stand
 With a single gold curl in the hand
 Held up to be looked at by me,—

II

While you ask me to ponder and say
 What a father and mother can do,
 With the bright fellow-locks put
 away
 Out of reach, beyond kiss, in the clay
 Where the violets press nearer
 than you :

III

Shall I speak like a poet, or run
 Into weak woman's tears for relief ?
 Oh, children !—I never lost one,—

O O

Yet my arm's round my own little
son,
And Love knows the secret of
Grief.

IV

And I feel what it must be and is,
When God draws a new angel so
Through the house of a man up to
His,
With a murmur of music, you miss,
And a rapture of light, you forgo.

V

How you think, staring on at the
door,
Where the face of your angel
flashed in,
That its brightness, familiar before,
Burns off from you ever the more
For the dark of your sorrow and
sin.

VI

"God lent him and takes him," you
sigh;
—Nay, there let me break with
your pain:
God's generous in giving, say I,—
And the thing which He gives, I deny
That He ever can take back again.

VII

He gives what He gives. I appeal
To all who bear babes—in the hour
When the veil of the body we feel
Rent round us,—while torments re-
veal
The motherhood's advent in power,

VIII

And the babe cries!—has each of us
known
By apocalypse (God being there
Full in nature) the child is our own,
Life of life, love of love, moan of moan,
Through all changes, all times,
everywhere.

IX

He's ours and for ever. Believe,
O father!—O mother, look back
To the first love's assurance! To
give
Means with God not to tempt or
deceive
With a cup thrust in Benjamin's
sack.

X

He gives what He gives. Be con-
tent!
He resumes nothing given,—be
sure!
God lend? Where the usurers lent
In His temple, indignant He went
And scourged away all those
impure.

XI

He lends not; but gives to the end,
As He loves to the end. If it seem
That He draws back a gift, compre-
hend
'Tis to add to it rather,—amend,
And finish it up to your dream,—

XII

Or keep,—as a mother will toys
Too costly, though given by herself,
Till the room shall be stiller from
noise,
And the children more fit for such
joys,
Kept over their heads on the shelf.

XIII

So look up, friends! you, who indeed
Have possessed in your house a
sweet piece
Of the Heaven which men strive for,
must need
Be more earnest than others are,—
speed
Where they loiter, persist where
they cease.

XIV

You know how one angel smiles there.
Then weep not. 'Tis easy for you
To be drawn by a single gold hair
Of that curl, from earth's storm and
despair;
To the safe place above us. Adieu.

A VIEW ACROSS THE ROMAN CAMPAGNA

(1861)

I

OVER the dumb Campagna-sea,
Out in the offing through mist and
rain,
Saint Peter's Church heaves silently
Like a mighty ship in pain,
Facing the tempest with struggle
and strain.

II

Motionless waifs of ruined towers,
 Soundless breakers of desolate land :
 The sullen surf of the mist devours
 That mountain-range upon either
 hand,
 Eaten away from its outline grand.

III

And over the dumb Campagna-sea
 Where the ship of the Church
 heaves on to wreck,
 Alone and silent as God must be,
 The Christ walks. Ay, but Peter's
 neck
 Is stiff to turn on the foundering
 deck.

IV

Peter, Peter ! if such be thy name,
 Now leave the ship for another to
 steer,
 And proving thy faith evermore the
 same,
 Come forth, tread out through the
 dark and drear,
 Since He who walks on the sea is here.

V

Peter, Peter ! He does not speak ;
 He is not as rash as in old Galilee :
 Safer a ship, though it toss and leak,
 Than a reeling foot on a rolling sea !
 And he's got to be round in the
 girth, thinks he.

VI

Peter, Peter ! He does not stir ;
 His nets are heavy with silver fish ;
 He reckons his gains, and is keen to
 infer
 —“ The broil on the shore, if the
 Lord should wish ;
 But the surgeon goes to the Cæsar's
 dish.”

VII

Peter, Peter ! thou fisher of men,
 Fisher of fish wouldst thou live in-
 stead ?
 Haggling for pence with the other
 Ten,
 Cheating the market at so much a
 head,
 Gripping the Bag of the traitor
 Dead ?

VIII

At the triple crow of the Gallic cock

Thou weep'st not, thou, though
 thine eyes be dazed :
 What bird comes next in the tempest
 shock ?
 —Vultures ! see,—as when Romu-
 lus gazed,—
 To inaugurate Rome for a world
 amazed !

THE KING'S GIFT

I

TERESA, ah, Teresita !
 Now what has the messenger brought
 her,
 Our Garibaldi's young daughter,
 To make her stop short in her
 singing ?
 Will she not once more repeat a
 Verse from that hymn of our hero's,
 Setting the souls of us ringing ?
 Break off the song where the tear
 rose ?
 Ah, Teresita !

II

A young thing, mark, is Teresa :
 Her eyes have caught fire, to be sure,
 in
 That necklace of jewels from Turin,
 Till blind their regard to us men is.
 But still she remembers to raise a
 Sly look to her father, and note—
 “ Could she sing on as well about
 Venice,
 Yet wear such a flame at her throat ?
 Decide for Teresa.”

III

Teresa, ah, Teresita !
 His right hand has paused on her
 head—
 “ Accept it, my daughter,” he said ;
 “ Ay, wear it, true child of thy
 mother !
 Then sing, till all start to their feet, a
 New verse ever bolder and freer !
 King Victor's no king like another,
 But verily noble as *we* are,
 Child, Teresita !”

PARTING LOVERS

(SIENA, 1860)

I

I LOVE thee, love thee, Giulio ;
 Some call me cold, and some de-
 mure ;

And if thou hast ever guessed that so
I loved thee . . . well, the proof
was poor

And no one could be sure.

II

Before thy song (with shifted rhymes
To suit my name) did I undo
The persian? If it stirred sometimes,
Thou hast not seen a hand push
through

A foolish flower or two.

III

My mother listening to my sleep,
Heard nothing but a sigh at night,—
The short sigh rippling on the deep,
When hearts run out of breath and sight

Of men, to God's clear light.

IV

When others named thee,—thought
thy brows
Were straight, thy smile was tender,—“Here
He comes between the vineyard-
rows!”

I said not “Ay,” nor waited, Dear,
To feel thee step too near.

V

I left such things to bolder girls,—
Olivia or Clotilda. Nay,
When that Clotilda, through her
curls,
Held both thine eyes in hers one
day,

I marvelled, let me say.

VI

I could not try the woman's trick :
Between us straightway fell the
blush
Which kept me separate, blind and
sick.

A wind came with thee in a flush,
As blown through Sinai's bush.

VII

But now that Italy invokes
Her young men to go forth and
chase
The foe or perish,—nothing chokes
My voice, or drives me from the
place.

I look thee in the face.

VIII

I love thee! It is understood,
Confest: I do not shrink or start.

No blushes! all my body's blood
Has gone to greaten this poor heart.
That, loving, we may part.

IX

Our Italy invokes the youth
To die if need be. Still there's
room,
Though earth is strained with dead in
truth :
Since twice the lilies were in bloom
They have not grudged a tomb.

X

And many a plighted maid and wife
And mother, who can say since then
“My country,”—cannot say through
life
“My son,” “my spouse,” “my
flower of men,”
And not weep dumb again.

XI

Heroic males the country bears,—
But daughters give up more than
sons :
Flags wave, drums beat, and una-
wares
You flash your souls out with the
guns,
And take your Heaven at once.

XII

But we!—we empty heart and home
Of life's life, love! We bear to
think
You're gone,—to feel you may not
come,—
To hear the door-latch stir and
clink,
Yet no more you! . . . nor sink.

XIII

Dear God! when Italy is one,
Complete, content from bound to
bound,
Suppose, for my share, earth's undone
By one grave in't!—as one small
wound
Will kill a man, 'tis found.

XIV

What then? If love's delight must
end,
At least we'll clear its truth from
flaws.
I love thee, love thee, sweetest friend!
Now take my sweetest without
pause,
And help the nation's cause.

XV

And thus, of noble Italy
 We'll both be worthy! Let her
 show
 The future how we made her free,
 Not sparing life . . . nor Giulio,
 Nor this . . . this heartbreak!
 Go.

MOTHER AND POET

(TURIN, AFTER NEWS FROM GAETA,
 1861)

I

DEAD! One of them shot by the sea
 in the east,
 And one of them shot in the west
 by the sea.
 Dead! both my boys! When you
 sit at the feast
 And are wanting a great song for
 Italy free,
 Let none look at me!

II

Yet I was a poetess only last year,
 And good at my art, for a woman,
 men said;
 But *this* woman, *this*, who is agonised
 here,
 —The east sea and west sea rhyme
 on in her head
 For ever instead.

III

What art can a woman be good at?
 Oh, vain!
 What art *is* she good at, but hurt-
 ing her breast
 With the milk-teeth of babes, and a
 smile at the pain?
 Ah boys, how you hurt! you were
 strong as you pressed,
 And I proud, by that test.

IV

What art's for a woman? To hold
 on her knees
 Both darlings! to feel all their arms
 round her throat,
 Cling, strangle a little! to sew by
 degrees
 And 'broider the long-clothes and
 neat little coat;
 To dream and to doat.

V

To teach them . . . It stings there!
I made them indeed
 Speak plain the word *country*. *I*
 taught them, no doubt,
 That a country's a thing men should
 die for at need,
I prated of liberty, rights, and about
 The tyrant cast out.

VI

And when their eyes flashed . . . O
 my beautiful eyes! . . .
I exulted; nay, let them go forth at
 the wheels
 Of the guns, and denied not. But
 then the surprise
 When one sits quite alone! Then
 one weeps, and one kneels!
 God, how the house feels!

VII

At first, happy news came, in gay
 letters moiled
 With my kisses,—of camp-life and
 glory, and how
 They both loved me; and, soon com-
 ing home to be spoiled,
 In return would fan off every fly
 from my brow
 With their green laurel-bough.

VIII

Then was triumph at Turin: "An-
 cona was free!"
 And someone came out of the cheers
 in the street,
 With a face pale as stone, to say
 something to me.
 My Guido was dead! I fell down
 at his feet,
 While they cheered in the
 street.

IX

I bore it; friends soothed me; my
 grief looked sublime
 As the ransom of Italy. One boy
 remained
 To be leant on and walked with, re-
 calling the time
 When the first grew immortal,
 while both of us strained
 To the height he had gained.

X

And letters still came, shorter, sad-
 der, more strong,
 Writ now but in one hand, "I was
 not to faint,—

One loved me for two—would be with
me ere long :
And *Viva l'Italia!*—he died for,
our saint,
Who forbids our complaint."

xi

My Nanni would add, "he was safe,
and aware
Of a presence that turned off the
balls,—was imprest
It was Guido himself, who knew what
I could bear,
And how 'twas impossible, quite
dispossessed,
To live on for the rest."

xii

On which, without pause, up the tele-
graph-line
Swept smoothly the next news
from Gaeta :—*Shot.*
Tell his mother. Ah, ah, "his,"
"their" mother,—not "mine,"
No voice says "My mother" again
to me. What !
You think Guido forgot ?

xiii

Are souls straight so happy that,
dizzy with Heaven,
They drop earth's affections, con-
ceive not of woe ?
I think not. Themselves were too
lately forgiven
Through THAT Love and Sorrow
which reconciled so
The Above and Below.

xiv

O Christ of the five wounds, Who
look'dst through the dark
To the face of Thy mother ! con-
sider, I pray,
How we common mothers stand deso-
late, mark,
Whose sons, not being Christs, die
with eyes turned away,
And no last word to say !

xv

Both boys dead ? but that's out of
nature. We all
Have been patriots, yet each house
must always keep one.
'Twere imbecile, hewing out roads
to a wall ;
And, when Italy's made, for what
end is it done
If we have not a son ?

xvi

Ah, ah, ah ! when Gaeta's taken, what
then ?
When the fair wicked queen sits
no more at her sport
Of the fire-balls of death crashing
souls out of men ?
When the guns of Cavalli with final
retort
Have cut the game short ?

xvii

When Venice and Rome keep their
new jubilee,
When your flag takes all heaven for
its white, green and red,
When *you* have your country from
mountain to sea,
When King Victor has Italy's
crown on his head,
(And *I* have my Dead)—

xviii

What then ? Do not mock me. Ah,
ring your bells low,
And burn your lights faintly ! *My*
country is there,
Above the star pricked by the last
peak of snow :
My Italy's THERE, with my brave
civic Pair,
To disfranchise despair !

xix

Forgive me. Some women bear
children in strength,
And bite back the cry of their pain
in self-scorn ;
But the birth-pangs of nations will
wring us at length
Into wail such as this—and we sit
on forlorn
When the man-child is born.

xx

Dead ! One of them shot by the sea
in the east,
And one of them shot in the west
by the sea.
Both ! both my boys ! If in keeping
the feast
You want a great song for your
Italy free,
Let none look at *me* !

[This was Laura Savio, of Turin, a poetess
and patriot, whose sons were killed at Ancona
and Greta.]

NATURE'S REMORSES

(ROME, 1861)

I

HER soul was bred by a throne, and fed
 From the sucking-bottle used in
 her race
 On starch and water (for mother's
 milk
 Which gives a larger growth instead),
 And, out of the natural liberal
 grace,
 Was swaddled away in violet silk.

II

And young and kind, and royally
 blind,
 Forth she stepped from her palace-
 door
 On three-piled carpet of compli-
 ments,
 Curtains of incense drawn by the
 wind
 In between her for evermore
 And daylight issues of events.

III

On she drew, as a queen might do,
 To meet a Dream of Italy,—
 Of magical town and musical
 wave,
 Where even a god, his amulet blue
 Of shining sea, in an ecstasy
 Dropt and forgot in a Nereid's
 cave.

IV

Down she goes, as the soft wind blows,
 To live more smoothly than mor-
 tals can,
 To love and to reign as queen
 and wife,
 To wear a crown that smells of a rose,
 And still, with a sceptre as light as
 a fan,
 Beat sweet time to the song of life.

V

What is this? As quick as a kiss
 Falls the smile from her girlish
 mouth!
 The lion-people has left its lair,
 Roaring along her garden of bliss,
 And the fiery underworld of the
 South
 Scorched a way to the upper air.

VI

And a fire-stone ran in the form of a
 man,

Burningly, boundingly, fatal and
 fell,
 Bowling the kingdom down!
 Where was the King?
 She had heard somewhat, since life
 began,
 Of terrors on earth and horrors in
 hell,
 But never, never of such a thing.

VII

You think she dropped when her
 dream was stopped,
 When the blotch of Bourbon blood
 inlay,
 Lividly rank, her new lord's
 cheek?
 Not so. Her high heart overtopped
 The royal part she had come to play.
 Only the men in that hour were
 weak.

VIII

And twice a wife by her ravaged life,
 And twice a queen by her kingdom
 lost,
 She braved the shock and the
 counter-shock
 Of hero and traitor, bullet and knife,
 While Italy pushed, like a vengeful
 ghost,
 That son of the Cursed from
 Gaeta's rock.

IX

What will ye give her, who could not
 deliver,
 German Princesses? A laurel-
 wreath
 All over-scored with your signa-
 tures,
 Graces, Serenities, Highnesses ever?
 Mock her not, fresh from the truth
 of Death,
 Conscious of dignities higher
 than yours.

X

What will ye put in your casket shut,
 Ladies of Paris, in sympathy's
 name?
 Guizot's daughter, what have
 you brought her?
 Withered immortelles, long ago cut
 For guilty dynasties perished in
 shame,
 Putrid to memory, Guizot's
 daughter?

XI

Ah poor queen ! so young and serene !
 What shall we do for her, now
 hope's done,
 Standing at Rome in these ruins
 old,
 She too a ruin and no more a queen ?
 Leave her that diadem made by
 the sun
 Turning her hair to an innocent
 gold.

XII

Ay ! bring close to her, as 'twere a
 rose, to her,
 Yon free child from an Apennine
 city
 Singing for Italy,—dumb in the
 place !
 Something like solace, let us suppose,
 to her
 Given, in that homage of wonder
 and pity,
 By his pure eyes to her beautiful
 face.

XIII

Nature, excluded, savagely brooded,
 Ruined all queendom and dogmas
 of state,—
 Then in reaction remorseful and
 mild,
 Rescues the womanhood, nearly
 eluded,
 Shows her what's sweetest in
 womanly fate—
 Sunshine from Heaven, and the
 eyes of a child.

THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH

[THE LAST POEM]

ROME, MAY, 1861

I

" Now give us lands where the olives
 grow,"
 Cried the North to the South,
 " Where the sun with a golden mouth
 can blow
 Blue bubbles of grapes down a vine-
 yard-row !"
 Cried the North to the South.
 " Now give us men from the sunless
 plain,"
 Cried the South to the North,
 " By need of work in the snow and the
 rain,

Made strong, and brave by familiar
 pain !"

Cried the South to the North.

II

" Give lucider hills and intenser seas,"
 Said the North to the South,
 " Since ever by symbols and bright
 degrees
 Art, childlike, climbs to the dear
 Lord's knees,"
 Said the North to the South.
 " Give strenuous souls for belief and
 prayer,"
 Said the South to the North,
 " That stand in the dark on the lowest
 stair,
 While affirming of God, ' He is cer-
 tainly there,'"

Said the South to the North.

III

" Yet oh, for the skies that are softer
 and higher !"
 Sighed the North to the South ;
 " For the flowers that blaze, and the
 trees that aspire,
 And the insects made of a song or a
 fire !"
 Sighed the North to the South.
 " And oh, for a seer to discern the
 same !"
 Sighed the South to the North ;
 " For a poet's tongue of baptismal
 flame,
 To call the tree or the flower by its
 name !"
 Sighed the South to the North.

IV

The North sent therefore a man of men
 As a grace to the South ;
 And thus to Rome came Andersen.
 —" *Alas, but must you take him
 again ?*"
 Said the South to the North.

TRANSLATIONS

PARAPHRASE ON THEOCRITUS

THE CYCLOPS

(IDYL XI)

AND so an easier life our Cyclops drew,
 The ancient Polyphemus, who in
 youth
 Loved Galatea while the manhood
 grew

<p>Adown his cheeks and darkened round his mouth. No jot he cared for apples, olives, roses ; Love made him mad : the whole world was neglected, The very sheep went backward to their closes From out the fair green pastures, self-directed. And singing Galatea, thus, he wore The sunrise down along the weedy shore, And pined alone, and felt the cruel wound Beneath his heart, which Cypris' arrow bore, With a deep pang ; but, so, the cure was found ; And sitting on a lofty rock he cast His eyes upon the sea, and sang at last :—</p> <p>“ O whitest Galatea, can it be That thou shouldst spurn me off who love thee so ? More white than curds, my girl, thou art to see, More meek than lambs, more full of leaping glee Than kids, and brighter than the early glow On grapes that swell to ripen,—sour like thee ! Thou comest to me with the fragrant sleep, And with the fragrant sleep thou goest from me ; Thou fliest . . . fliest, as a frightened sheep Flies the grey wolf !—yet Love did overcome me, So long ;—I loved thee, maiden, first of all When down the hills (my mother fast beside thee) I saw thee stray to pluck the summer- fall Of hyacinth bells, and went myself to guide thee : And since my eyes have seen thee, they can leave thee No more, from that day's light ! But thou . . . by Zeus,</p>	<p>Thou wilt not care for <i>that</i>, to let it grieve thee ! I know thee, fair one, why thou springest loose From my arm round thee. Why ? I tell thee, Dear ! One shaggy eyebrow draws its smudging road Straight through my ample front, from ear to ear,— One eye rolls underneath ; and yawning, broad Flat nostrils feel the bulging lips too near. Yet . . . ho, ho !—<i>I</i>,—whatever I appear,— Do feed a thousand oxen ! When I have done, I milk the cows, and drink the milk that's best ! I lack no cheese, while summer keeps the sun ; And after, in the cold, it's ready prest ! And then, I know to sing, as there is none Of all the Cyclops can . . . a song of thee, Sweep apple of my soul, on love's fair tree And of myself who love thee . . . till the West Forgets the light, and all but I have rest. I feed for thee, besides ; eleven fair does, And all in fawn ; and four tame whelps of bears. Come to me, Sweet ! thou shalt have all of those In change for love ! I will not halve the shares. Leave the blue sea, with pure white arms extended To the dry shore ; and, in my cave's recess, Thou shalt be gladder for the noon- light ended,— For here be laurels, spiral cypresses, Dark ivy, and a vine whose leaves enfold Most luscious grapes ; and here is water cold, The wooded Ætna pours down through the trees From the white snows,—which gods were scarce too bold</p>
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To drink in turn with nectar. Who
 with these
 Would choose the salt wave of the
 lukewarm seas ?
 Nay, look on me ! If I am hairy and
 rough,
 I have an oak's heart in me ;
 there's a fire
 In these grey ashes which burns hot
 enough ;
 And when I burn for *thee*, I grudge
 the pyre
 No fuel . . . not my soul, nor this
 one eye,—
 Most precious thing I have, because
 thereby
 I see thee, Fairest ! Out, alas ! I wish
 My mother had borne me finned like
 a fish,
 That I might plunge down in the
 ocean near thee,
 And kiss thy glittering hand be-
 tween the weeds,
 If still thy face were turned ; and I
 would bear thee
 Each lily white, and poppy fair
 that bleeds
 Its red heart down its leaves !—one
 gift, for hours
 Of summer,—one, for winter ;
 since, to cheer thee,—
 I could not bring at once all kinds of
 flowers.
 Even now, girl, now, I fain would
 learn to swim,
 If stranger in a ship sailed nigh, I
 wis,—
 That I may know how sweet a thing
 it is
 To live down with you, in the Deep
 and Dim !
 Come up, O Galatea, from the ocean,
 And having come, forget again to
 go !
 As I, who sing out here my heart's
 emotion,
 Could sit for ever. Come up from
 below !
 Come, keep my flocks beside me, milk
 my kine,—
 Come, press my cheese, distract my
 whey and curd !
 Ah, mother ! she alone . . . that
 mother of mine . . .
 Did wrong me sore ! I blame her !
 —Not a word

Of kindly intercession did she address
 Thine ear with for my sake ; and
 ne'ertheless
 She saw me wasting, wasting, day
 by day !
 Both head and feet were aching, I
 will say,
 All sick for grief, as I myself was sick !
 O Cyclops, Cyclops, whither hast
 thou sent
 Thy soul on fluttering wings ? If
 thou wert bent
 On turning bowls, or pulling green
 and thick
 The sprouts to give thy lamblkins,
 —thou wouldst make thee
 A wiser Cyclops than for what we
 take thee.
 Milk dry the present ! Why pursue
 too quick
 That future which is fugitive aright ?
 Thy Galatea thou shalt haply
 find,—
 Or else a maiden fairer and more
 kind ;
 For many girls do call me through the
 night,
 And, as they call, do laugh out
 silverly.
 I, too, am something in the world, I
 see ! ”
 While thus the Cyclops love and
 lambs did fold,
 Ease came with song, he could not buy
 with gold.

PARAPHRASES ON APULEIUS

PSYCHE GAZING ON CUPID

(METAMORPH., LIB. IV.)

THEN Psyche, weak in body and soul,
 put on
 The cruelty of Fate, in place of
 strength :
 She raised the lamp to see what
 should be done,
 And seized the steel, and was a
 man at length
 In courage, though a woman ! Yes,
 but when,
 The light fell on the bed whereby
 she stood
 To view the “ *beast* ” that lay there,
 —certes, then,

She saw the gentlest, sweetest
 beast in wood—
 Even Cupid's self, the beauteous god!
 more beauteous
 For that sweet sleep across his eye-
 lids dim!
 The light, the lady carried as she
 viewed,
 Did blush for pleasure as it lighted
 him,
 The dagger trembled from its aim
 unduteous;
 And *she* . . . oh, *she*—amazed and
 soul-distraught,
 And fainting in her whiteness like a
 veil,
 Slid down upon her knees, and,
 shuddering, thought
 To hide—though in her heart—the
 dagger pale!
 She would have done it, but her hands
 did fail
 To hold the guilty steel, they
 shivered so,—
 And feeble, exhausted, unawares she
 took
 To gazing on the god,—till, look by
 look,
 Her eyes with larger life did fill and
 glow.
 She saw his golden head alight with
 curls,—
 She might have guessed their
 brightness in the dark
 By that ambrosial smell of heavenly
 mark!
 She saw the milky brow, more pure
 than pearls,
 The purple of the cheeks, divinely
 sundered
 By the globed ringlets, as they
 glided free,
 Some back, some forwards,—all so
 radiantly,
 That, as she watched them there,
 she never wondered
 To see the lamplight, where it
 touched them, tremble:
 On the god's shoulders, too, she
 marked his wings
 Shine faintly at the edges and
 resemble
 A flower that's near to blow. The
 poet sings
 And lover sighs, that Love is
 fugitive;

And certes, though these pinions lay
 reposing,
 The feathers on them seemed to
 stir and live
 As if by instinct, closing and unclosing.
 Meantime the god's fair body slum-
 bered deep,
 All worthy of Venus, in his shining
 sleep;
 While at the bed's foot lay the
 quiver, bow,
 And darts,—his arms of godhead.
 Psyche gazed
 With eyes that drank the wonders
 in,—said,—“Lo,
 Be these my husband's arms?”—
 and straightway raised
 An arrow from the quiver-case, and
 tried
 Its point against her finger,—trem-
 bling till
 She pushed it in too deeply (foolish
 bride!)
 And made her blood some dewdrops
 small distil,
 And learnt to love Love, of her own
 good-will.

PSYCHE WAFTED BY ZEPHYRUS

(METAMORPH., LIB. IV.)

WHILE Psyche wept upon the rock
 forsaken,
 Alone, despairing, dreading,—
 gradually
 By Zephyrus she was enwrapt and
 taken
 Still trembling,—like the lilies
 planted high,—
 Through all her fair white limbs.
 Her vesture spread,
 Her very bosom eddying with
 surprise,—
 He drew her slowly from the moun-
 tain-head,
 And bore her down the valleys with
 wet eyes,
 And laid her in the lap of a green dell
 As soft with grass and flowers as
 any nest,
 With trees beside her, and a limpid
 well:
 Yet Love was not far off from all
 that Rest.

PSYCHE AND PAN
(METAMORPH., LIB. V.)

THE gentle River, in her Cupid's honour,

Because he used to warm the very wave,

Did ripple aside, instead of closing on her,

And cast up Psyche, with a refluence brave,

Upon the flowery bank,—all sad and sinning.

Then Pan, the rural god, by chance was leaning

Along the brow of waters as they wound,

Kissing the reed-nymph till she sank to ground,

And teaching, without knowledge of the meaning,

To run her voice in music after his Down many a shifting note; (the goats around,

In wandering pasture and most leaping bliss,

Drawn on to crop the river's flowery hair).

And as the hoary god beheld her there,

The poor, worn fainting Psyche! —knowing all

The grief she suffered, he did gently call

Her name, and softly comfort her despair :—

“ O wise, fair lady, I am rough and rude,

And yet experienced through my weary age!

And if I read aright, as soothsayer should,

Thy faltering steps of heavy pilgrimage,

Thy paleness, deep as snow we cannot see

The roses through,—thy sighs of quick returning,

Thine eyes that seem, themselves, two souls in mourning,—

Thou lovest, girl, too well, and bitterly!

But hear me : rush no more to a head-long fall :

Seek no more deaths! leave wail, lay sorrow down,

And pray the sovran god; and use withal

Such prayer as best may suit a tender youth,

Well-pleased to bend to flatteries from thy mouth

And feel them stir the myrtle of his crown.”

—So spake the shepherd-god; and answer none

Gave Psyche in return : but silently She did him homage with a bended

knee,
And took the onward path.—

PSYCHE PROPITIATING CERES
(METAMORPH., LIB. VI.)

THEN mother Ceres from afar beheld her,

While Psyche touched, with reverent fingers meek,

The temple's scythes; and with a cry compelled her :—

“ O wretched Psyche, Venus roams to seek

Thy wandering footsteps round the weary earth,

Anxious and maddened, and adjures thee forth

To accept the imputed pang, and let her wreak

Full vengeance with full force of deity!

Yet *thou*, forsooth, art in my temple here,

Touching my scythes, assuming my degree,

And daring to have thoughts that are not fear!”

—But Psyche clung to her feet, and as they moved

Rained tears along their track, tear dropped on tear,

And drew the dust on in her trailing locks,

And still, with passionate prayer, the charge disproved :—

“ Now, by thy right hand's gathering from the shocks

Of golden corn,—and by thy glad-some rites

Of harvest,—and thy consecrated sights

Shut safe and mute in chests,—and
by the course

Of thy slave-dragons,—and the driv-
ing force

Of ploughs along Sicilian glebes pro-
found,—

By thy swift chariot,—by thy stead-
fast ground,—

By all those nuptial torches that
departed

With thy lost daughter,—and by
those that shone

Back with her, when she came again
glad-hearted,—

And by all other mysteries which
are done

In silence at Eleusis,—I beseech thee,
O Ceres, take some pity, and abstain

From giving to my soul extremest
pain

Who am the wretched Psyche!
Let me teach thee

A little mercy, and have thy leave
to spend

A few days only in thy garnered corn,
Until that wrathful goddess, at the

end,
Shall feel her hate grow mild, the

longer borne,—

Or till, alas!—this faintness at my
breast

Pass from me, and my spirit
apprehend

From life-long woe a breath-time
hour of rest!"

—But Ceres answered, "I am moved
indeed

By prayers so moist with tears,
and would defend

The poor beseecher from more utter
need:

But where old oaths, anterior ties,
commend,

I cannot fail to a sister, lie to a
friend,

As Venus is to me. Depart with
speed!"

PSYCHE AND THE EAGLE

(METAMORPH., LIB. VI.)

BUT sovran Jove's rapacious Bird,
the regal

High percher on the lightning, the
great eagle,

Drove down with rushing wings;
and,—thinking how,

By Cupid's help, he bore from Ida's
brow

A cup-boy for his master,—he in-
clined

To yield, in just return, an influence
kind;

The god being honoured in his lady's
woe.

And thus the Bird wheeled downward
from the track,

Gods follow gods in, to the level low
Of that poor face of Psyche left in

wrack.
—"Now fie, thou simple girl!" the

Bird began;

"For if thou think to steal and carry
back

A drop of holiest stream that ever
ran,

No simpler thought, methinks, were
found in man.

What! know'st thou not these Sty-
gian waters be

Most holy, even to Jove? that as, on
earth,

Men swear by gods, and by the thun-
der's worth,

Even so the heavenly gods do utter
forth

Their oaths by Styx's flowing majesty?
And yet, one little urnful, I agree

To grant thy need!" Whereat, all
hastily,

He takes it, fills it from the willing
wave,

And bears it in his beak, incarnadined
By the last Titan-prey he screamed

to have;

And, striking calmly out, against the
wind,

Vast wings on each side,—there,
where Psyche stands,

He drops the urn down in her lifted
hands.

PSYCHE AND CERBERUS

(METAMORPH., LIB. VI.)

A MIGHTY dog with three colossal
necks,

And heads in grand proportion;
vast as fear,

With jaws that bark the thunder out
that breaks

In most innocuous dread for
ghosts anear,

Who are safe in death from sorrow :
 he reclines
 Across the threshold of queen Proser-
 pine's
 Dark-sweeping halls, and, there, for
 Pluto's spouse,
 Doth guard the entrance of the
 empty house.
 When Psyche threw the cake to him,
 once amain
 He howled up wildly from his hunger-
 pain,
 And was still, after.—

PSYCHE AND PROSERPINE
 (METAMORPH., LIB. VI.)

THEN Psyche entered in to Proserpine
 In the dark house, and straightway
 did decline
 With meek denial the luxurious seat,
 The liberal board for welcome
 strangers spread,
 But sat down lowly at the dark
 queen's feet,
 And told her tale, and brake her
 oaten bread.
 And when she had given the pyx in
 humble duty,
 And told how Venus did entreat
 the queen
 To fill it up with only one day's beauty
 She used in Hades, star-bright and
 serene,
 To beautify the Cyprian, who had
 been
 All spoilt with grief in nursing her
 sick boy,—
 Then Proserpine, in malice and in joy,
 Smiled in the shade, and took the
 pyx, and put
 A secret in it; and so, filled and
 shut,
 Gave it again to Psyche. Could
 she tell
 It held no beauty, but a dream
 of hell?

PSYCHE AND VENUS
 (METAMORPH., LIB. VI.)

AND Psyche brought to Venus what
 was sent
 By Pluto's spouse; the paler, that
 she went
 So low to seek it, down the dark
 descent.

MERCURY CARRIES PSYCHE TO
 OLYMPUS

(METAMORPH., LIB. VI.)

THEN Jove commanded the god
 Mercury
 To float up Psyche from the earth.
 And she
 Sprang at the first word, as the foun-
 tain springs,
 And shot up bright and rustling
 through his wings.

MARRIAGE OF PSYCHE AND CUPID
 (METAMORPH., LIB. VI.)

AND Jove's right hand approached
 the ambrosial bowl
 To Psyche's lips, that scarce dared
 yet to smile,—
 "Drink, O my daughter, and ac-
 quaint thy soul
 With deathless uses, and be glad
 the while!
 No more shall Cupid leave thy lovely
 side;
 Thy marriage-joy begins for never-
 ending."
 While yet he spake,—the nuptial
 feast supplied,—
 The bridegroom on the festive
 couch was bending
 O'er Psyche in his bosom—Jove, the
 same,
 On Juno, and the other deities,
 Alike ranged round. The rural cup-
 boy came
 And poured Jove's nectar out with
 shining eyes,
 While Bacchus, for the others, did as
 much,
 And Vulcan spread the meal; and
 all the Hours
 Made all things purple with a
 sprinkle of flowers,
 Or roses chiefly, not to say the touch
 Of their sweet fingers; and the
 Graces glided
 Their balm around, and the Muses,
 through the air,
 Struck out clear voices, which were
 still divided
 By that divinest song Apollo there
 Intoned to his lute; while Aphro-
 ditè fair

Did float her beauty along the tune,
and play
The notes right with her feet. And
thus, the day
Through every perfect mood of joy
was carried.
The Muses sang their chorus;
Satyrus
Did blow his pipes; Pan touched
his reed;—and thus
At last were Cupid and his Psyche
married.

PARAPHRASES ON NONNUS

HOW BACCHUS FINDS ARIADNE
SLEEPING

(DIONYSIACA, LIB. XLVII.)

WHEN Bacchus first beheld the deso-
late
And sleeping Ariadne, wonder straight
Was mixed with love in his great
golden eyes;
He turned to his Bacchantes in sur-
prise,
And said with guarded voice,—
“Hush! strike no more
Your brazen cymbals; keep those
voices still
Of voice and pipe; and since ye
stand before
Queen Cypris, let her slumber as
she will!
And yet the cestus is not here in proof.
A Grace, perhaps, whom sleep has
stolen aloof:
In which case, as the morning shines
in view,
Wake this Aglaia!—yet in Naxos,
who
Would veil a Grace so? Hush!
And if that she
Were Hebe, which of all the gods can
be
The pourer-out of wine? or if we think
She's like the shining moon by
ocean's brink,
The guide of herds,—why, could
she sleep without
Endymion's breath on her cheek? or
if I doubt
Of silver-footed Thetis, used to tread
These shores,—even *she* (in reverence
be it said)
Has no such rosy beauty to dress deep

With the blue waves. The Loxian
goddess might
Repose so from her hunting-toil
aright
Beside the sea, since toil gives birth
to sleep,
But who would find her with her
tunic loose,
Thus? Stand off, Thracian! stand
off! Do not leap,
Not this way! Leave that piping,
since I choose,
O dearest Pan, and let Athenè rest!
And yet if she be Pallas . . . truly
guessed . . .
Her lance is—where? her helm and
ægis—where?”
—As Bacchus closed, the miserable
Fair
Awoke at last, sprang upward from
the sands,
And gazing wild on that wild throng
that stands
Around, around her, and no Theseus
there!—
Her voice went moaning over shore
and sea,
Beside the halcyon's cry; she called
her love:
She named her hero, and raged mad-
deningly
Against the brine of waters; and,
above,
Sought the ship's track, and cursed
the hours she slept;
And still the chiefest execration swept
Against queen Paphia, mother of the
ocean;
And cursed and prayed by times in
her emotion
The winds all round.
Her grief did make her glorious; her
despair
Adorned her with its weight. Poor
wailing child!
She looked like Venus when, the
goddess smiled
At liberty of godship, debonair;
Poor Ariadne! and her eyelids fair
Hid looks beneath them lent her by
Persuasion
And every Grace, with tears of Love's
own passion.
She wept long; then she spake:—
“Sweet sleep did come

While sweetest Theseus went. Oh,
 glad and dumb,
 I wish he had left me still ! for in my
 sleep
 I saw his Athens, and did gladly keep
 My new bride-state within my
 Theseus' hall ;
 And heard the pomp of Hymen, and
 the call
 Of ' Ariadne, Ariadne,' sung
 In choral joy ; and there, with joy I
 hung
 Spring-blossoms round love's altar !
 —ay, and wore
 A wreath myself ; and felt *him* ever-
 more,
 Oh, evermore beside me, with his
 mighty
 Grave head bowed down in prayer
 to Aphrodité !
 Why, what a sweet, sweet dream !
He went with it,
 And left me here unwedded where I
 sit !
 Persuasion help me ! The dark
 night did make me
 A brideship, the fair morning takes
 away ;
 My Love had left me when the Hour
 did wake me ;
 And while I dreamed of marriage,
 as I say,
 And blest it well, my blessed Theseus
 left me :
 And thus the sleep, I loved so, has
 bereft me.
 Speak to me, rocks, and tell my grief
 to-day,
 Who stole my love of Athens ? " . . .

HOW BACCHUS COMFORTS ARIADNE
 (DIONYSIACA, LIB. XLVII.)

THEN Bacchus' subtle speech her
 sorrow crossed :—
 " O maiden, dost thou mourn for
 having lost
 The false Athenian heart ? and dost
 thou still
 Take thought of Theseus, when thou
 mayst at will
 Have Bacchus for a husband ? Bac-
 chus bright !
 A god in place of mortal ! Yes, and
 though

The mortal youth be charming in
 thy sight,
 That man of Athens cannot strive
 below,
 In beauty and valour, with my deity !
 Thou'lt tell me of the labyrinthine
 dweller,
 The fierce man-bull he slew : I pray
 thee, be,
 Fair Ariadne, the true deed's true
 teller,
 And mention thy clue's help ! be-
 cause, forsooth,
 Thine armed Athenian hero had not
 found
 A power to fight on that prodigious
 ground,
 Unless a lady in her rosy youth
 Had lingered near him : not to speak
 the truth
 Too definitely out till names be
 known—
 Like Paphia's---Love's---and Ariadne's
 own.
 Thou wilt not say that Athens can
 compare
 With Æther, nor that Minos rules
 like Zeus,
 Nor yet that Gnosus has such golden
 air
 As high Olympus. Ha ! for noble
 use
 We came to Naxos ! Love has well
 intended
 To change thy bridegroom ! Happy
 thou, defended
 From entering in thy Theseus' earthly
 hall,
 That thou mayst hear the laughters
 rise and fall
 Instead, where Bacchus rules ! ' Or
 wilt thou choose
 A still-surpassing glory ?—take it
 all,—
 A heavenly house, Kronion's self for
 kin,—
 A place where Cassiopea sits within
 Inferior light, for all her daughter's
 sake,
 Since Perseus, even amid the stars,
 must take
 Andromeda in chains ethereal !
 But *I* will wreathe *thee*, sweet, an
 astral crown,
 And as my queen and spouse thou
 shalt be known—

Mine, the crown-lover's!" Thus,
 at length, he proved
 His comfort on her; and the maid
 was moved;
 And casting Theseus' memory down
 the brine,
 She straight received the troth of her
 divine
 Fair Bacchus; Love stood by to close
 the rite:
 The marriage-chorus struck up clear
 and light,
 Flowers sprouted fast about the cham-
 ber green,
 And with spring-garlands on their
 heads, I ween,
 The Orchomenian dancers came along
 And danced their rounds in Naxos to
 the song.
 A Hamadryad sang a nuptial dit
 Right shrilly: and a Naiad sat be-
 side
 A fountain, with her bare foot shelv-
 ing it,
 And hymned of Ariadne, beauteous
 bride,
 Whom thus the god of grapes had
 deified.
 Ortygia sang out, louder than her
 wont,
 An ode which Phœbus gave her to
 be tried,
 And leapt in chorus, with her stead-
 fast front,
 While prophet Love, the stars have
 called a brother,
 Burnt in his crown, and twined in
 one another.
 His love-flower with the purple roses,
 given
 In type of that new crown assigned
 in heaven.

PARAPHRASE ON HESIOD

BACCHUS AND ARIADNE

(THEOG. 947.)

THE golden-haired Bacchus did
 espouse
 That fairest Ariadne, Minos' daugh-
 ter,
 And made her wifehood blossom in
 the house;
 Where such protective gifts Kro-
 nion brought her,
 Nor Death nor Age could find her
 when they sought her.

B.P.

PARAPHRASE ON EURIPIDES

ANTISTROPHE

(TROADES, 853.)*

LOVE, Love, who once didst pass the
 Dardan portals,
 Because of heavenly passion!
 Who once didst lift up Troy in exult-
 ation,
 To mingle in thy bond the high
 Immortals!—

Love, turned from his own
name

To Zeus's shame,
 Can help no more at all.
 And Eos' self, the fair, white-steeded
 Morning,—

Her light which blesses other lands,
returning,

Has changed to a gloomy pall!
 She looked across the land with eyes
 of amber,—

She saw the city's fall,—
 She who, in pure embraces,
 Had held there, in the hymeneal
 chamber,

Her children's father, bright Tithonus
old,

Whom the four steeds with starry
brows and paces

Bore on, snatched upward, on the car
of gold,

And with him, all the land's full hope
of joy!

The love-charms of the gods are vain
for Troy.

PARAPHRASES ON HOMER

HECTOR AND ANDROMACHE

(ILIAD, LIB. VI.)

SHE rushed to meet him: the nurse
following

Bore on her bosom the unsaddened
child,

A simple babe, prince Hector's well-
loved son,

Like a star shining when the world is
dark.

Scamandrius, Hector called him;
but the rest

Named him Astyanax, the city's
prince,

* Rendered after Mr. Burges' reading, in
some respects—not quite all.

P P

Because that Hector only had saved
Troy.

He, when he saw his son, smiled
silently ;

While, dropping tears, Andromache
pressed on,

And clung to his hand, and spake,
and named his name.

" Hector, my best one,—thine own
nobleness

Must needs undo thee. Pity hast
thou none

For this young child, and this most
sad myself,

Who soon shall be thy widow—since
that soon

The Greeks will slay thee in the
general rush—

And then, for me, what refuge, 'reft
of thee,

But to go graveward ? Then, no
comfort more

Shall touch me, as in the old sad
times thou know'st—

Grief only—grief ! I have no father
now,

No mother mild ! Achilles the
divine,

He slew my father, sacked his lofty
Thebes,

Cilicia's populous city, and slew its
king,

Eëtion—father !—did not spoil the
corse,

Because the Greek revered him in his
soul,

But burnt the body with its dædal
arms,

And poured the dust out gently.
Round that tomb

The Oreads, daughters of the goat-
nursed Zeus,

Tripped in a ring, and planted their
green elms.

There were seven brothers with me
in the house,

Who all went down to Hades in one
day,—

For he slew all, Achilles the divine,
Famed for his swift feet,—slain
among their herds

Of cloven-footed bulls and flocking
sheep !

My mother too, who queened it o'er
the woods

Of Hippoplacia, he, with other spoil,
Seized,—and, for golden ransom,
freed too late,—

Since, as she went home, arrowy
Artemis

Met her and slew her at my father's
door.

But—O my Hector,—thou art still to
me

Father and mother !—yes, and
brother dear,

O thou, who art my sweetest spouse
beside !

Come now, and take me into pity !
Stay

I' the town here with us ! Do not
make thy child

An orphan, nor a widow thy poor
wife !

Call up the people to the fig-tree,
where

The city is most accessible, the wall
Most easy of assault !—for thrice

thereby

The boldest Greeks have mounted to
the breach,—

Both Ajaxes, the famed Idomeneus,
Two sons of Atreus, and the noble one

Of Tydeus,—whether taught by some
wise seer,

Or by their own souls prompted and
inspired."

Great Hector answered :—" Lady,
for these things

It is my part to care. And I fear
most

My Trojans, and their daughters, and
their wives,

Who through their long veils would
glance scorn at me

If, coward-like, I shunned the open
war.

Nor doth my own soul prompt me to
that end !

I learnt to be a brave man constantly,
And to fight foremost where my

Trojans fight,
And vindicate my father's glory and
mine—

Because I know, by instinct and my
soul,

The day comes that our sacred Troy
must fall,

And Priam and his people. Knowing
which,

I have no such grief for all my Trojans' sake,
 For Hecuba's, for Priam's, our old king,
 Not for my brothers', who so many
 and brave
 Shall bite the dust before our
 enemies,—
 As, sweet, for *thee* !—to think some
 mailed Greek
 Shall lead thee weeping and deprive
 thy life
 Of the free sun-sight—that, when
 gone away
 To Argos, thou shalt throw the distaff
 there,
 Not for thy uses—or shalt carry in-
 stead
 Upon thy loathing brow, as heavy as
 doom,
 The water of Greek wells—Messeis'
 own,
 Or Hyperca's !—that some stander-
 by,
 Marking my tears fall, shall say,
 ' This is she,
 The wife of that same Hector who
 fought best
 Of all the Trojans, when all fought for
 Troy—'
 Ay !—and, so speaking, shall renew
 thy pang
 That, 'reft of him so named, thou
 shouldst survive
 To a slave's life ! But earth shall
 hide my curse
 Ere that shriek sound, wherewith
 thou art dragged from Troy."

Thus Hector spake, and stretched his
 arms to his child.
 Against the nurse's breast, with
 childly cry,
 The boy clung back, and shunned
 his father's face,
 And feared the glittering brass and
 waving hair
 Of the high helmet, nodding horror
 down.
 The father smiled, the mother could
 not choose
 But smile too. Then he lifted from
 his brow
 The helm, and set it on the ground to
 shine :
 Then, kissed his dear child—raised
 him with both arms,

And thus invoked Zeus and the
 general gods :—

" Zeus, and all godships ! grant this
 boy of mine
 To be the Trojans' help, as I myself,—
 To live a brave life and rule well in
 Troy !
 Till men shall say, ' The son exceeds
 the sire
 By a far glory.' Let him bring home
 spoil
 Heroic, and make glad his mother's
 heart."

With which prayer, to his wife's
 extended arms
 He gave the child ; and she received
 him straight
 To her bosom's fragrance—smiling
 up her tears.
 Hector gazed on her till his soul was
 moved ;
 Then softly touched her with his
 hand and spake.

" My best one—ware of passion and
 excess
 In any fear. There's no man in the
 world
 Can send me to the grave apart from
 fate,—

And no man . . . sweet, I tell thee
 . . . can fly fate—
 No good nor bad man. Doom is self-
 fulfilled.

But now, go home, and ply thy
 woman's task
 Of wheel and distaff ! bid thy maidens
 haste

Their occupation. War's a care for
 men—
 For all men born in Troy, and chief
 for me."

Thus spake the noble Hector, and
 resumed
 His crested helmet, while his spouse
 went home ;
 But as she went, still looked back
 lovingly,
 Dropping the tears from her reverted
 face.

THE DAUGHTERS OF PANDARUS
 (ODYSS., LIB. XX.)

AND so these daughters fair of Pan-
 darus

The whirlwinds took. The gods had slain their kin :
 They were left orphans in their father's house.
 And Aphrodite came to comfort them
 With incense, luscious honey, and fragrant wine ;
 And Herè gave them beauty of face and soul
 Beyond all women ; purest Artemis
 Endowed them with her stature and white grace ;
 And Pallas taught their hands to flash along
 Her famous looms. Then, bright with deity,
 Toward far Olympus, Aphrodite went
 To ask of Zeus (who has his thunder-joys
 And his full knowledge of man's mingled fate)
 How best to crown those other gifts with love
 And worthy marriage : but, what time she went,
 The ravishing Harpies snatched the maids away.
 And gave them up, for all their loving eyes,
 To serve the Furies who hate constantly.

ANOTHER VERSION

So the storms bore the daughters of Pandarus out into thrall—
 The gods slew their parents ; the orphans were left in the hall.
 And there, came, to feed their young lives, Aphrodite divine,
 With the incense, the sweet-tasting honey, the sweet-smelling wine ;
 Herè brought them her wit above woman's, and beauty of face ;
 And pure Artemis gave them her stature, that form might have grace :
 And Athenè instructed their hands in her works of renown ;
 Then, afar to Olympus, divine Aphrodite moved on :
 To complete other gifts, by uniting each girl to a mate,
 She sought Zeus, who has joy in the thunder and knowledge of fate,

Whether mortals have good chance or ill ! But the Harpies a-late
 In the storm came, and swept off the maidens, and gave them to wait,
 With that love in their eyes, on the Furies who constantly hate.

PARAPHRASE ON ANACREON

ODE TO THE SWALLOW

Thou indeed, little Swallow,
 A sweet yearly comer,
 Art building a hollow
 New nest every summer,
 And straight dost depart
 Where no gazing can follow,
 Past Memphis, down Nile !
 Ah ! but Love all the while
 Builds his nest in my heart,
 Through the cold winter-weeks :
 And as one Love takes flight,
 Comes another, O Swallow,
 In an egg warm and white,
 And another is callow.
 And the large gaping beaks
 Chirp all day and all night :
 And the Loves who are older
 Help the young and the poor Loves,
 And the young Loves grown bolder
 Increase by the score Loves—
 Why, what can be done ?
 If a noise comes from one,
 Can I bear all this rout of a hundred
 and more Loves ?

PARAPHRASES ON HEINE

[THE LAST TRANSLATION]

ROME, 1860

I

I

OUT of my own great woe
 I make my little songs,
 Which rustle their feathers in throngs
 And beat on her heart even so.

II

They found the way, for their part,
 Yet come again, and complain,
 Complain, and are not fain
 To say what they saw in her heart.

II

I

ART thou indeed so adverse ?
 Art thou so changed indeed ?
 Against the woman who wrongs me
 I cry to the world in my need.

II

O recreant lips unthankful,
How could ye speak evil, say,
Of the man who so well has kissed
you
On many a fortunate day ?

III

I

My child, we were two children,
Small, merry by childhood's law ;
We used to crawl to the hen-house
And hide ourselves in the straw.

II

We crowed like cocks, and whenever
The passers near us drew—
Cock-a-doodle ! they thought
'Twas a real cock that crew.

III

The boxes about our courtyard
We carpeted to our mind,
And lived there both together—
Kept house in a noble kind.

IV

The neighbour's old cat often
Came to pay us a visit ;
We made her a bow and curtesy,
Each with a compliment in it.

V

After her health we asked,
Our care and regard to evince—
(We have made the very same
speeches
To many an old cat since).

VI

We also sat and wisely
Discours'd, as old folk do,
Complaining how all went better
In those good times we knew,—

VII

How love and truth and believing
Had left the world to itself,
And how so dear was the coffee,
And how so rare was the pelf.

VIII

The children's games are over,
The rest is over with youth—
The world, the good games, the good
times,
The belief, and the love, and the
truth.

IV

I

Thou lovest me not, thou lovest me
not !
'Tis scarcely worth a sigh :
Let me look in thy face, and no king
in his place
Is a gladder man than I.

II

Thou hatest me well, thou hatest me
well—
Thy little red mouth has told :
Let it reach me a kiss, and, however
it is,
My child, I am well consoled.

V

I

My own sweet Love, if thou in the
grave,
The darksome grave, wilt be,
Then will I go down by the side, and
crave
Love-room for thee and me.

II

I kiss and caress and press thee wild,
Thou still, thou cold, thou white !
I wail, I tremble, and weeping mild,
Turn to a corpse at the right.

III

The Dead stand up, the midnight
calls,
They dance in airy swarms—
We two keep still where the grave-
shade falls,
And I lie on in thine arms.

IV

The Dead stand up, the Judgment-
day
Bids such to weal or woe—
But nought shall trouble us where we
stay
Embraced and embracing below.

VI

I

THE years they come and go,
The races drop in the grave,
Yet never the love doth so,
Which here in my heart I have.

II

Could I see thee but once, one day,
And sink down so on my knee,
And die in thy sight while I say,
“ Lady, I love but thee ! ”

THE GREEK CHRISTIAN POETS

AND THE ENGLISH POETS

1863

ADVERTISEMENT

THE following pieces, first printed in 1842 by the "Athenæum," are now reprinted with the liberal permission of that Journal.

It was intended by its Writer, that the account of the Greek Christian Poets should receive corrections, or certainly additions: a project which new objects of interest came to delay. The glancing series of notes upon the English Poets seems suggested by, as well as consequent upon, the account; unless it arose from the publication of Wordsworth's "Poems of Early and Late Years, including The Borderers,"—in the form of a review of which the latter part of the paper originally appeared: the former was occasioned by "The Book of the Poets," a compilation of the day.

Both performances, laid away long ago, and only lately unfolded for the first time, were perhaps almost forgotten by their Author; but on the whole, in all likelihood, some way or other reproduction was desired: and this is effected accordingly.

A name, which occurs unworthily enough toward the close, should be withdrawn were it found possible: its presence may be pardoned, as serving at least to mark more dates than one.

LONDON, February, 1863.

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE GREEK CHRISTIAN POETS

THE Greek language was a strong intellectual life, stronger than any similar one which has lived in the breath of "articulately speaking men," and survived it. No other language has lived so long and died so hard,—pang by pang, each with a dolphin colour—yielding reluctantly to that doom of death and silence which must come at last to the speaker and the speech. Wonderful it is to look back fathoms down the great Past, thousands of

years away—where whole generations lie unmade to dust—where the sounding of their trumpets, and the rushing of their scythed chariots, and that great shout which brought down the birds stone dead from beside the sun, are more silent than the dog breathing at our feet, or the fly's paces on our window-pane; and yet, from the heart of which silence, to feel *words* rise up like a smoke—words of men, even words of women, uttered at first, perhaps, in "excellent low voices," but audible and distinct to our times, through "the dreadful pother" of life and death, the hissing of the steam-engine and the cracking of the cerement! It is wonderful to look back and listen. Blind Homer spoke this Greek after blind Demodocus, with a quenchless light about his brows, which he felt through his blindness. Pindar rolled his chariots in it, prolonging the clamour of the games. Sappho's heart beat through it, and heaved up the world's. Æschylus strained it to the stature of his high thoughts. Plato crowned it with his divine peradventures. Aristophanes made it drunk with the wine of his fantastic merriment. The latter Platonists wove their souls away in it, out of sight of other souls. The first Christians heard in it God's new revelation, and confessed their Christ in it from the suppliant's knee, and presently from the bishop's throne. To all times, and their transitions, the language lent itself. Through the long summer of above two thousand years, from the grasshopper Homer sang of, to that grasshopper of Manuel Phile, which might indeed have been "a burden," we can in nowise mistake the chirping of the bloodless, deathless, wondrous creature. It chirps on in Greek still. At the close of that long summer, though Greece lay withered to her root, her academic groves and philosophic gardens all leafless and bare, still from the

depth of the desolation rose up the voice—

O cuckoo, shall I call thee bird,
Or but a wandering voice?

which did not grow hoarse, like other cuckoos, but sang not unsweetly, if more faintly than before. Strangely vital was this Greek language—

Some straggling spirits were behind, to be Laid out with most thrift on its memory.

It seemed as if nature could not part with so lovely a tune, as if she felt it ringing on still in her head—or as if she hummed it to herself, as the watchman used to do, with "night wandering round" him, when he watched wearily on the palace roof of the doomed house of Atreus.

But, although it is impossible to touch with a thought the last estate of Greek poetical literature without the wonder occurring of its being still Greek, still poetry,—though we are startled by the phenomenon of life-like sounds coming up from the ashes of a mighty people—at the aspect of an Alcestis returned from the dead, *veiled* but identical,—we are forced to admit, after the first pause of admiration, that a change has passed upon the great thing we recognise, a change proportionate to the greatness, and involving a caducity. Therefore, in adventuring some imperfect account of the Greek ecclesiastical poets, it is right to premise it with the full and frank admission, that they are not accomplished poets,—that they do not, in fact, reach with their highest lifted hand, the lowest foot of those whom the world has honoured as Greek poets, but who have honoured the world more by their poetry. The instrument of the Greek tongue was, at the Christian era, an antique instrument, somewhat worn, somewhat stiff in the playing, somewhat deficient in notes which it had once, somewhat feeble and uncertain in such as it retained. The subtlety of the ancient music, the variety of its cadences, the intersections of sweetness in the rise and fall of melodies, rounded and contained in the unity

of its harmony, are as utterly lost to this later period as the digamma was to an earlier one. We must not seek for them; we shall not find them; their place knows them no more. Not only was there a lack in the instrument,—there was also a deficiency in the players. Thrown aside, after the old flute-story, by a goddess, it was taken up by a mortal hand—by the hand of men gifted and noble in their generation, but belonging to it intellectually, even by their gifts and their nobleness. Another immortal, a true genius, might, nay, would, have asserted himself, and wrung a poem of almost the ancient force from the infirm instrument. It is easy to fancy, and to wish that it had been so—that some martyr or bishop, when bishops were martyrs, and the earth was still warm with the Sacrificial blood, had been called to the utterance of his soul's devotion, with the emphasis of a great poet's power. No one, however, was so called. Of all the names which shall presently be reckoned, and of which it is the object of this sketch to give some account, beseeching its readers to hold several in honourable remembrance, not one can be crowned with a steady hand as a true complete poet's name. Such a crown is a sacred dignity, and, as it should not be touched idly, it must not be used here. A born Warwick could find, here, no head for a crown.

Yet we shall reckon names "for remembrance," and speak of things not ignoble—of meek heroic Christians, and heavenward faces washed serene by tears—strong knees bending humbly for the very strength's sake—bright intellects burning often to the winds in fantastic shapes, but oftener still with an honest inward heat, vehement on heart and brain—most eloquent fallible lips that convince us less than they persuade—a divine loquacity of human falsities—poetical souls, that are not souls of poets! Surely not ignoble things! And the reader will perceive at once that the writer's heart is not laid beneath the wheels of

a cumbrous ecclesiastical antiquity—that its intent is to love what is lovable, to honour what is honourable, and to kiss both through the dust of centuries, but by no means to recognise a *hierarchy*, whether in the church or in literature.

If, indeed, an opinion on the former relation might be regarded here, it would be well to suggest, that to these "Fathers," as we call them filially, with heads turned away, we owe more reverence for the greyiness of their beards than theologic gratitude for the outstretching of their hands. Devoted and disinterested as many among them were, they, themselves, were at most times evidently and consciously surer of their *love*, in a theologic sense, than of their knowledge in any. It is no place for a reference to religious controversy; and if it were, we are about to consider them simply as poets, without trenching on the very wide ground of their prose works and ecclesiastical opinions. Still one passing remark may be admissible, since the fact *is* so remarkable—how any body of Christian men can profess to derive their opinions from "the opinions of the Fathers," when *all* bodies might do so equally. These fatherly opinions are, in truth, multifarious, and multitudinous as the fatherly "sublime grey hairs." There is not only a father apiece for every child, but, not to speak it unfilially, a piece of every father for every child. Justin Martyr would, of himself, set up a wilderness of sects, besides "something over" for the future ramifications of each several one. What then should be done with our "Fathers"? Leave them to perish by the time-Ganges, as old men innocent and decrepit, and worthy of no use or honour? Surely not. We may learn of them, if God will let us, *love*, and love is much—we may learn devotedness of them and warm our hearts by theirs; and this, although we rather distrust them as commentators, and utterly refuse them the reverence of our souls, in the capacity of theological oracles.

Their place in literature, which we have to do with to-day, may be found, perhaps, by a like moderation. That place is not, it has been admitted, of the highest; and that it is not of the lowest the proof will presently be attempted. There is a mid-air kingdom of the birds called Nephelococcygia, of which Aristophanes tells us something; and we might stand there a moment so as to measure the local adaptitude, putting up the Promethean umbrella to hide us from the "Gods," if it were not for the "men and columns" lower down. But as it is, the very suggestion, if persisted in, would sink all the ecclesiastical antiquity it is desirable to find favour for, to all eternity, in the estimation of the kindest reader. No! the mid-air kingdom of the birds will not serve the wished-for purpose even illustratively, and by grace of the nightingale. "May the sweet saints pardon us" for wronging them by an approach to such a sense, which, if attained and determined, would have consigned them so certainly to what St. Augustine called—when *he* was moderate too—"mitissima damnatio," a very mild species of damnation.

It would be, in fact, a rank injustice to the beauty we are here to recognise, to place these writers in the rank of mediocrities, supposing the harsh sense. They may be called mediocrities as poets among poets, but not so as no poets at all. Some of them may sing before gods and men, and in front of any column, from Trajan's to that projected one in Trafalgar Square, to which is promised the miraculous distinction of making the National Gallery sink lower than we see it now. They may, as a body, sing exultingly, holding the relation of column to gallery, in front of the whole "corpus" of Latin ecclesiastical poetry, and claim the world's ear and the poet's palm. That the modern Latin poets have been more read by scholars, and are better known by reputation to the general reader, is unhappily true: but the truth

involves no good reason why it should be so, nor much marvel that it is so. Besides the greater accessibility of Latin literature, the vicissitude of life is extended to posthumous fame, and Time, who is Justice to the poet, is sometimes too busy in pulverising bones to give the due weight to memories. The modern Latin poets, "elegant,"—which is the critic's word to spend upon them,—elegant as they are occasionally, polished and accurate as they are comparatively, stand cold and lifeless, with statue-eyes, near these good, fervid, faulty Greeks of ours—and we do not care to look again. Our Greeks do, in their degree, claim their ancestral advantage, not the mere advantage of language,—nay, least the advantage of language—a comparative elegance and accuracy of expression being ceded to the Latins—but that higher distinction inherent in brain and breast, of vivid thought and quick sensibility. What if we swamp for a moment the Tertullians and Prudentius, and touch, by a permitted anachronism, with one hand, VIDA, with the other, GREGORY NAZIANZEN, what then? What though the Italian poet be smooth as the Italian Canova—working like him out of stone—smooth and cold, disdaining to ruffle his dactyls with the beating of his pulses—what then? Would we change for him our sensitive Gregory, with all his defects in the glorious "*scientia metrica*"? We would not—perhaps we should not, even if those defects were not attributable, as Mr. Boyd, in the preface to his work on the Fathers, most justly intimates, to the changes incident to a declining language.

It is, too, as religious poets, that we are called upon to estimate these neglected Greeks—as religious poets, of whom the universal church and the world's literature would gladly embrace more names than can be counted to either. For it is strange that, although Wilhelm Meister's uplooking and downlooking aspects, the reverence to things above and things below, the religious all-clasp-

ing spirit, be, and must be, in degree and measure, the grand necessity of every true poet's soul,—of religious poets, strictly so called, the earth is very bare. Religious "parcel-poets" we have, indeed, more than enough; writers of hymns, translators of scripture into prose, or of prose generally into rhymes, of whose heart-devotion a higher faculty were worthy. Also there have been poets, not a few, singing as if earth were still Eden; and poets, many, singing as if in the first hour of exile, when the echo of the Curse was louder than the whisper of the Promise. But the right "genius of Christianity" has done little up to this moment, even for Chateaubriand. We want the touch of Christ's hand upon our literature, as it touched other dead things—we want the sense of the saturation of Christ's blood upon the souls of our poets, that it may cry *through* them in answer to the ceaseless wail of the Sphinx of our humanity, expounding agony into renovation. Something of this has been perceived in art when its glory was at the fullest. Something of a yearning after this may be seen among the Greek Christian poets, something which would have been *much* with a stronger faculty. It will not harm us in any case, as lovers of literature and honest judges, if we breathe away, or peradventure *besom* away, the thick dust which lies upon their heavy folios, and besom away, or peradventure *breathe* away, the inward intellectual dust, which must be confessed to lie thickly, too, upon the heavy poems, and make our way softly and meekly into the heart of such hidden beauties (hidden and scattered) as our good luck, or good patience, or, to speak more reverently, the intrinsic goodness of the Fathers of Christian Poetry, shall permit us to discover. May gentle readers favour the endeavour, with "gentle airs," if any! readers not too proud to sleep, were it only for Homer's sake; nor too passionate, at their worst displeasure, to do worse than growl in their sleeves,

after the manner of "most delicate monsters." It is not intended to crush this forbearing class with folios, nor even with a folio; only to set down briefly in their sight what shall appear to the writer the characteristics of each poet, and to illustrate the opinion by the translation of a few detached passages, or, in certain possible cases, of short entire poems. And so much has been premised, simply that too much be not expected.

It has the look of an incongruity, to begin an account of the Greek Christian poets with a Jew; and EZEKIEL is a Jew in his very name, and a "poet of the Jews" by profession. Moreover he is wrapt in such a mystery of chronology, that nobody can be quite sure of his not having lived before the Christian era—and one whole whisper establishes him as a unit of the famous seventy or seventy-two, under Ptolemy Philadelphus. Let us waive the chronology in favour of the mystery. He is brought out into light by Clemens Alexandrinus; and being associated with Greek poets, and a writer himself of Greek verses, we may receive him in virtue of the *τοτοτοτοτοτοτοτοτοτοτο*, with little fear, in his case, of implying an injustice in that middle bird-locality of Nephelococcygia. The reader must beware of confounding him with the prophet; and the circumstance of the latter's inspiration is sufficiently distinguishing. Our Greek Ezekiel is, indeed, whatever his chronology may be, no *vates* in the ancient sense. A Greek tragedy (and some fragments of a tragedy are all that we hold of him), by a Jew, and on a Jewish subject, "The Exodus from Egypt," may startle the most serene of us into curiosity—with which curiosity begins and ends the only strong feeling we can bring to bear upon the work; since, if the execution of it is somewhat curious too, there is a gentle collateral dulness which effectually secures us from feverish excitement. Moses prologises after the worst manner of Euripides (worse than

the worse), compendiously relating his adventures among the bulrushes and in Pharaoh's household, concluded by his slaying an Egyptian, *because nobody was looking*. So saith the poet. Then follows an interview between the Israelite and Zipporah, and her companions, wherein he puts to her certain geographical questions, and she (as far as we can make out through fragmentary cracks) rather *brusquely* proposes their mutual marriage: on which subject he does not venture an opinion; but we find him next confiding his dreams in a family fashion to her father, who considers them satisfactory. Here occurs a broad crack down the tragedy—and we are suddenly called to the revelation from the bush by an extraordinarily ordinary dialogue, between Deity and Moses. It is a surprising specimen of the kind of composition adverted to some lines ago, as the translation of Scripture into prose; and the sublime simplicity of the scriptural narrative being thus done (away) into Greek for a certain time, the following reciprocation—to which our old moralities can scarcely do more, or less, than furnish a parallel—prays for an English—exposure. The Divine Being is supposed to address Moses:—

But what is this thou holdest in thine hand?—

Let thy reply be sudden.

Mosès.

Moses. 'Tis my rod—
I chasten with it quadrupeds and men.

Voice from the Bush. Cast it upon the ground—and straight recoil ;

or it shall be, to move thy wonderment,
terrible serpent.

Moses. It is cast. But THOU,
Be gracious to me, Lord. How terrible!

ow mo

I shudder to behold it, my limbs shake.

The reader is already consoled for the destiny which mutilated the tragedy, without requiring the last words of the analysis. Happily characteristic of the "meekest of men," is Moses's naïve admission of the uses of his rod—to beat men and animals withal—of course "when nobody is looking."

CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, to whom we owe whatever gratitude is due for our fragmentary Ezekiel, was originally an Athenian philosopher, afterwards a converted Christian, a Presbyter of the Church at Alexandria, and preceptor of the famous Origen. Clemens flourished at the close of the second century. As a prose writer—and we have no prose writings of his, except such as were produced subsequently to his conversion—he is learned and various. His "Pedagogue" is a wanderer, to universal intents and purposes; and his "Tapestry," if the "Stromata" may be called so, is embroidered in all cross-stitches of philosophy, with not much scruple as to the shading of colours. In the midst of all is something, ycleped a dithyrambic ode, addressed to the Saviour, composite of fantastic epithets in the mode of the old litanies, and almost as bald of merit as the Jew-Greek drama, though Clemens himself (worthier in worthier places) be the poet. Here is the opening, which is less fanciful than what follows it:—

Curb for wild horses,
Wing for bird-courses
Never yet flown!
Helm, safe for weak ones,
Shepherd, bespeak once,
The young lambs thine own.
Rouse up the youth,
Shepherd and feeder,
So let them bless thee,
Praise and confess thee,—
Pure words on pure mouth,—
Christ, the child-leader!
O, the saints' Lord!
All-dominant word!
Holding, by Christdom,
God's highest wisdom!
Column in place
When sorrows seize us—
Endless in grace
Unto man's race,
Saving one, Jesus!
Pastor and ploughman,
Helm, curb, together,—
Pinion that now can
(Heavenly of feather)
Raise and release us!
Fisher who catcheth
Those whom he watcheth . . .

It goes on; but we need not do so.

"By the pricking of our thumbs," we

know that the reader has had enough of it.

Passing rapidly into the fourth century, we would offer our earliest homage to Gregory Nazianzen, "That name must ever be to us a friend," when the two APOLINARIUS cross our path and intercept the "all hail." Apolinarius the grammarian, formerly of Alexandria, held the office of presbyter in the church of Laodiceæ, and his son Apolinarius, an accomplished rhetorician, that of *reader*, an ancient ecclesiastical office, in the same church. This younger Apolinarius was a man of indomitable energies and most practical inferences; and when the edict of Julian forbade to the Christians the study of Grecian letters, he, assisted perhaps by his father's hope and hand, stood strong in the gap, not in the attitude of supplication, not with the gesture of consolation, but in power and sufficiency to fill up the void and baffle the tyrant. Both father and son were in the work, by some testimony; the younger Apolinarius standing out, by all, as the chief worker, and only one in any extensive sense. "Does Julian deny us Homer?" said the brave man in his armed soul—"I am Homer!" and straightway he turned the whole Biblical history, down to Saul's accession, into Homeric hexameters,—dividing the work, so as to clench the identity of first and second Homers, into twenty-four books, each superscribed by a letter of the alphabet, and the whole acceptable, according to the expression of Sozomen, *ἀντὶ τῆς Ὀμήρου ποιήσεως*, in the place of Homer's poetry. "Does Julian deny us Euripides?" said Apolinarius again—"I am Euripides!" and up he sprang,—as good an Euripides (who can doubt it?) as he ever was a Homer. "Does Julian forbid us Menander?"—Pindar?—Plato?—I am Menander!—I am Pindar!—I am Plato!" And comedies, lyrics, philosophics, flowed fast at the word; and the gospels and epistles adapted themselves naturally to the rules of Socratic disputation. A brave man,

forsooth, was our Apolinarius of Laodiceæ, and literally a man of men—for, observe, says Sozomen, with a venerable innocence, at which the gravest may smile gravely,—as at a doublet worn awry at the Council of Nice,—that the old authors did each man his own work, whereas this Apolinarius did every man's work in addition to his own—and so admirably—intimates the ecclesiastical critic,—that if it were not for the common prejudice in favour of antiquity, no ancient could be missed in the all-comprehensive representativeness of the Laodicean writer. So excellent was his ability, to "out-brave the stars in several kinds of light," besides the Cæsar! Whether Julian, naturally mortified to witness this germination of illustrious heads under the very iron of his searing, vowed vengeance against the Hydra-spirit, by the sacred memory of the animation of his own beard, we do not exactly know. To embitter the wrong, Apolinarius sent him a treatise upon truth—a confutation of the pagan doctrine, apart from the scriptural argument,—the Emperor's notice of which is both worthy of his Cæsarship, and a good model-note for all sorts of critical dignities. Ἀνέγνω ἔγνω κατέγνω, is the Greek of it; so that, turning from the letter to catch something of the point, we may write it down—"I have perused, I have mused, I have abused": which provoked as imperious a retort—"Thou mayest have perused, but thou hast not mused; for hadst thou mused, thou wouldst not have abused." Brave Laodicean!

Apolinarius's laudable *double* of Greek literature has perished, the reader will be concerned to hear, from the face of the earth, being, like other *lusus*, or marvels, or monsters, brief of days. One only tragedy remains, with which the memory of Gregory Nazianzen has been right tragically affronted, and which Gregory,—*ἐλ τις αὐθιγός*, as he said of Constantine,—would cast off with the scorn and anger befitting an Apolin-

arian heresy. For Apolinarius, besides being an epist, dramatist, lyricist, philosopher, and rhetorician, was, we are sorry to add, in the eternal bustle of his soul, a heretic,—possibly for the advantage of something additional to do. He not only intruded into the churches hymns which were not authorised, being his own composition—so that reverend brows grew dark to hear women with musical voices sing them softly to the turning of their distaff,—but he fell into the heresy of denying a human soul to the perfect MAN, and of leaving the Divinity in bare combination with the Adamic dust. No wonder that a head so beset with many thoughts and individualities should at last turn round!—that eyes rolling in fifty fine frenzies of twenty-five fine poets should at last turn blind!—that a determination to rival all geniuses should be followed by a disposition more baleful in its exercise, to understand "all mysteries"! Nothing can be plainer than the step after step, whereby, through excess of vain-glory and morbid mental activity, Apolinarius, the vice-poet of Greece, subsided into Apolinarius the chief heretic of Christendom.

To go back sighingly to the tragedy, where we shall have to sigh again—the only tragedy left to us of all the tragic works of Apolinarius (but we do not sigh for *that*!)—let no voice ever more attribute it to Gregory Nazianzen. How could Mr. Alford do so, however hesitatingly, in his "Chapters," attaching to it, without the hesitation, a charge upon the writer, whether Gregory or another man, that *he*, whoever he was, had, of his own free will and choice, destroyed the old Greek originals out of which his tragedy was constructed, and left it a monument of their sacrifice as of the blood on his barbarian hand? The charge passes, not only before a breath, but before its own breath. The tragedy is, in fact, a specimen of *centoism*, which is the adaptation of the phraseology of one work to the construction of another; and we

have only to glance at it to perceive the Medæa of Euripides dislocated into the CHRISTUS PATIENS. Instead of the ancient opening—

Oh, would ship Argo had not sailed away
To Colchos by the rough Symplegades!
Nor ever had been felled in Pelion's
grove

The pine, hewn for her side! . . .
So she, my queen,
Medæa, had not touched this fatal shore,
Soul-struck by love of Jason!

Apolinarius opens it thus—

Oh, would the serpent had not glode along
To Eden's garden-land,—nor ever had
The crafty dragon planted in that grove
A slimy snare! So she, rib-born of man,
The wretched misled mother of our race,
Had dared not to dare on beyond worst
daring,

Soul-struck by love of—apples!

"Let us alone for keeping our countenance"—and at any rate we are bound to ask gravely of Mr. Alford, *is the Medæa destroyed?*—and if not, did the author of the "Christus Patiens" destroy his originals? and if not, may we not say of Mr. Alford's charge against that author, "Oh, would he had not made it!" So far from Apolinarius being guilty of destroying his originals, it was his reverence for them which struggled with the edict of the persecutor, and accomplished this dramatic adventure;—and this adventure, the only remaining specimen of his adventurousness, may help us to the secret of his wonderful fertility and omnirepresentativeness, which is probably this—that the great majority of his works, tragic, comic, lyric, and philosophic, consisted simply of *cen-tos*. Yet we pray for justice to Apolinarius: we pray for honour to his motives and energies. Without pausing to inquire whether it had been better and wiser to let poetry and literature depart at once before the tyranny of the edict, than to drag them back by the hair into attitudes grotesquely ridiculous—better and wiser for the Greek Christian schools to let them forgo altogether the poems of their Euripides, than adapt to the meek sorrows of

the tender Virgin-mother, the bold, bad, cruel frenzy of Medæa, in such verses as these—

She howls out ancient oaths, invokes the
faith
Of pledged right hands, and calls, for
witness, God!

—we pray straightforwardly for justice and honour to the motives and energies of Apolinarius. "Oh, would that" many lived *now* as appreciative of the influences of poetry on our schools and country, as impatient of their contraction, as self-devoted in the great work of extending them! There remains of his poetical labours, besides the tragedy, a translation of David's Psalms into "heroic verse," which the writer of these remarks has not seen,—and of which those critics who desire to deal gently with Apolinarius seem to begin their indulgence by doubting the authenticity.

It is pleasant to turn shortly round, and find ourselves face to face, not with the author of "Christus Patiens," but with one antagonistical both to his poetry and his heresy, GREGORY NAZIANZEN. A noble and tender man was this Gregory, and so tender, because so noble; a man to lose no cubit of his stature for being looked at steadfastly, or struck at reproachfully. "You may cast me down," he said, "from my bishop's throne, but you cannot banish me from before God's." And bishop as he was, his saintly crown stood higher than his tiara, and his loving martyr-smile, the crown of a nature more benign than his fortune, shone up toward both. Son of the bishop of Nazianzen, and holder of the diocese which was his birthplace, previous to his elevation to the level of the storm in the bishopric of Constantinople, little did he care for bishoprics or high places of any kind,—the desire of his soul being for solitude, quietude, and that silent religion, which should "rather be than seem." But his father's head bent whitely before him, even in the chamber of his brother's death,—and Basil, his beloved friend, the "half of his soul," pressed on him

with the weight of love ; and Gregory, feeling their tears upon his cheeks, did not count his own, but took up the priestly office. Poor Gregory ! not merely as a priest, but as a man, he had a sighing life of it. His student days at Athens, where he and Basil read together poems and philosophies, and holier things, or talked low and *misopogonistically* of their fellow-student Julian's bearded boding smile, were his happiest days. He says of himself,

As many stones

Were thrown at *me*, as other men had flowers.

Nor was persecution the worst evil ; for friend after friend, beloved after beloved, passed away from before his face, and the voice which charmed them living, spoke brokenly beside their graves,—his funeral orations marked severally the wounds of his heart,—and his genius served, as genius often does, to lay an emphasis on his grief. The passage we shall venture to translate is rather a cry than a song—

Where are my winged words ? Dissolved in air.

Where is my flower of youth ? All withered. Where

My glory ? Vanished. Where the strength I knew

From comely limbs ? Disease hath changed it too,

And bent them. Where the riches and the lands ?

GOD HATH THEM ! Yea, and sinners' snatching hands

Have grudged the rest. Where is my father, mother,

And where my blessed sister, my sweet brother ?

Gone to the grave !—There did remain for me

Alone my fatherland, till destiny, Malignly stirring a black tempest, drove

My foot from that last rest. And now I rove

Estranged and desolate a foreign shore, And drag my mournful life and age all

Throneless and cityless, and childless save

This father-care for children, which I have,

Living from day to day on wandering feet.

Where shall I cast this body ? What will greet

My sorrows with an end ? What gentle ground

And hospitable grave will wrap me round ? Wholast my dying eyelids stoop to close—

Some saint, the Saviour's friend ? or one of those

Who do not know Him ? The air interpose,

And scatter these words too.

The return upon the first thought is highly pathetic ; and there is a restlessness of anguish about the whole passage, which consecrates it with the cross of nature. His happy Athenian associations gave a colour, unwashed out by tears, to his mind and works. Half apostolical he was, and half scholastical ; and while he mused, on his bishop's throne, upon the mystic tree of twelve fruits, and the shining of the river of life, he carried, as Milton did, with a gentle and not ungraceful distraction, both hands full of green trailing branches from the banks of the Cephissus, nay, from the very plane-tree which Socrates sat under with Phædrus, when they two talked about beauty to the rising and falling of its leaves. As an orator, he was greater, all must feel if some do not think, than his contemporaries ; and the "golden mouth" might confess it meekly. Erasmus compares him to Isocrates, but the unlikeness is obvious : Gregory was not excellent at an artful blowing of the pipes. He spoke grandly, as the wind does, in gusts ; and, as in a mighty wind, which combines unequal noises, the creaking of trees and rude swinging of doors as well as the sublime sovereign rush along the valleys, we gather the idea, from his eloquence, less of music than of power. Not that he is cold as the wind is—the metaphor goes no further : Gregory cannot be cold, even by disfavour of his antithetic points. He is various in his oratory, full and rapid in allusion, briefly graphic in metaphor, equally sufficient for indignation or pathos, and gifted peradventure with a keener dagger of sarcasm than should hang in a saint's girdle. His orations

against Julian have all these characteristics, but they are not poetry, and we must pass down lower, and quite over his beautiful letters, to Gregory the poet.

He wrote *thirty thousand verses*, among which are several long poems, severally defective in a defect common but not necessary to short occasional poems, and lamentable anywhere, a want of unity and completeness. The excellences of his prose are transcribed, with whatever faintness, in his poetry—the exaltation, the devotion, the sweetness, the pathos, even to the playing of satirical power about the graver meanings. But although noble thoughts break up the dullness of the groundwork,—although, with the instinct of greater poets, he bares his heart in his poetry, and the heart is worth baring, still monotony of construction without unity of intention is the most wearisome of monotones, and, except in the case of a few short poems, we find it everywhere in Gregory. The lack of variety is extended to the cadences, and the pauses fall stiffly "*come corpo morto cade*." Melodious lines we have often: harmonious passages scarcely ever—the music turning heavily on its own axle, as inadequate to living evolution. The poem on his own life ("*De Vita sua*") is, in many places, interesting and affecting, yet faulty with all these faults. The poem on Celibacy, which state is commended by Gregory as becometh a bishop, has occasionally graphic touches, but is dull enough generally to suit the fairest spinster's view of that melancholy subject. If Hercules could have read it, he must have rested in the middle—from which the reader is entreated to forbear the inference that the poem has not been read through by the writer of the present remarks, seeing that that writer marked the grand concluding moment with a white stone, and laid up the memory of it among the chief triumphs, to say nothing of the fortunate deliverances, *vita sua*. In Gregory's elegiac poems, our ears, at least, are better contented,

because the sequence of pentameter to hexameter necessarily excludes the various cadence which they yearn for under other circumstances. His anacreontics are sometimes nobly written, with a certain brave recklessness, as if the thoughts despised the measure—and we select from this class a specimen of his poetry, both because three of his hymns have already appeared in the "*Athenæum*," and because the anacreontic in question includes to a remarkable extent, the various qualities we have attributed to Gregory, not omitting that play of satirical humour with which he delights to ripple the abundant flow of his thoughts. The writer, though also a translator, feels less misgiving than usual in offering to the reader, in such English as is possible, this spirited and beautiful poem.

SOUL AND BODY.

What wilt thou possess or be?
O my soul, I ask of thee.
What of great, or what of small,
Counted precious therewithal?
Be it only rare, and want it,
I am ready, soul, to grant it.
Wilt thou choose to have and hold
Lydian Gyges' charm of old,
So to rule us with a ring,
Turning round the jewelled thing,
Hidden by its face concealed,
And revealed by its revealed?
Or preferrest Midas' fate—
He who died in golden state,
All things being changed to gold?
Of a golden hunger dying,
Through a surfeit of "would I"—ing!
Wilt have jewels brightly cold,
Or may fertile acres please?
Or the sheep of many a fold,
Camels, oxen, for the world?
Nay! I will not give thee these!
These to take thou hast not will,
These to give I have not skill;
Since I cast earth's cares abroad,
That day when I turned to God.

Wouldst a throne, a crown sublime,
Bubble blown upon the time?
So thou mayest sit to-morrow
Looking downward in meek sorrow,
Some one walking by thee scornful
Who adored thee yester morning,
Some malign one? Wilt be bound
Fast in marriage (joy unsound!)
And be turned round and round

As the time turns? Wilt thou catch it,
That sweet sickness? and to match it
Have babies by the hearth, bewildering?
And if I tell thee the best children
Are none—what answer?

Wilt thou thunder
Thy rhetorics, move the people under?
Covetest to sell the laws
With no justice in thy cause,
And bear on, or else be borne,
Before tribunals worthy scorn?
Wilt thou shake a javelin rather
Breathing war? or wilt thou gather
Garlands from the wrestler's ring?
Or kill beasts for glorying?
Covetest the city's shout,
And to be in brass struck out?
Cravest thou that shade of dreaming,
Passing air of shifting seeming,
Rushing of a printless arrow,
Clapping echo of a hand?
What to those who understand
Are to-day's enjoyments narrow
Which to-morrow go again,
Which are shared with evil men,
And of which no man in his dying
Taketh aught for softer lying?
What then wouldst thou, if thy mood
Choose not these? what wilt thou be,
O my soul—a deity?
A God before the face of God,
Standing glorious in His glories,
Choral in His angels' chorus?

Go! upon thy wing arise,
Plumed by quick energies,
Mount in circles up the skies:
And I will bless thy winged passion,
Help with words thine exaltation,
And, like a bird of rapid feather,
Outlaunch thee, Soul, upon the ether.

But thou, O fleshly nature, say,
Thou with odours from the clay,
Since thy presence I must have
As a lady with a slave,
What wouldst thou possess or be,
That thy breath may stay with thee?
Nay! I owe thee nought beside,
Though thine hands be open wide.
Would a table suit thy wishes,
Fragrant with sweet oils and dishes
Wrought to subtle niceness? where
Stringed music strokes the air,
And blithe hand-clappings, and the
smooth

Fine postures of the tender youth
And virgins wheeling through the dance
With an unvelled countenance,—
Joys for drinkers, who love shame,
And the maddening wine-cup's flame.
Wilt thou such, how'er decried?
Take them,—and a rope beside!

Nay! this boon I give instead
Unto 'friend insatiated,—
May some rocky house receive thee,
Self-roofed, to conceal thee chiefly;
Or if labour there must lurk,
Be it by a short day's work!
And for garment, camel's hair,
As the righteous clothed were,
Clothe thee! or the bestial skin
Adam's bareness hid within,—
Or some green thing from the way,
Leaf of herb, or branch of vine,
Swelling, purpling as it may,
Fearless to be drunk for wine!
Spread a table there beneath thee,
Which a sweetness shall upbreathe thee,
And which the dearest earth is giving,
Simple present to all living!
When that we have placed thee near it,
We will feed thee with glad spirit.
Wilt thou eat? soft, take the bread,
Oaten cake, if that bested;
Salt will season all aright,
And thine own good appetite,
Which we measure not, nor fetter:
'Tis an uncooked condiment,
Famine's self the only better.
Wilt thou drink? why, here doth bubble
Water from a cup unspent,
Followed by no tipsy trouble,
Pleasure sacred from the grape!
Wilt thou have it in some shape
More like luxury? we are
No grudgers of wine-vinegar!
But if all will not suffice thee,
And thou covetest to draw
In that pitcher with a flaw,
Brimful pleasures heaven denies thee!
Go, and seek out, by that sign,
Other help than this of mine!
For me, I have not leisure so
To warm thee, sweet, my household foe,
Until, like a serpent frozen,
New-maddened with the heat, thou
loosen

Thy rescued fang within mine heart!

Wilt have measureless delights
Of gold-roofed palaces, and sights
From pictured or from sculptured art,
With motion near their life; and splendour
Of bas-relief, with tracery tender,
And varied and contrasted hues?
Wilt thou have, as nobles use,
Brodered robes to flow about thee?
Jewelled fingers? Need we doubt thee?
Gauds for which the wise will flout thee?
I most, who, of all beauty, know
It must be inward, to be so!

And thus I speak to mortals low,
Living for the hour, and o'er
Its shadow, seeing nothing more:
But for those of nobler bearing,

Who live more worthily of wearing
 A portion of the heavenly nature—
 To low estate of clayey creature,
 See, I bring the beggar's meed,
 Nutriment beyond the need!
 O, beholder of the Lord,
 Prove on me the flaming sword!
 Be mine husbandman, to nourish
 Holy plants, that words may flourish
 Of which mine enemy would spoil me,
 Using pleasurehood to foil me!
 Lead me closer to the tree
 Of all life's eternity;
 Which, as I have pondered, is
 The knowledge of God's greatresses:
 Light of One, and shine of Three,
 Unto Whom all things that be
 Flow and tend!

In such a guise,
 Whoever on the earth is wise
 Will speak unto himself: and who
 Such inner converse would eschew,—
 We say perforce of that poor wight,
 "He lived in vain!" and if *aright*,
 It is not the worst word we might.

AMPHILOCHIUS, bishop of Iconium, was beloved and much appreciated by Gregory, and often mentioned in his writings. Few of the works of Amphilocheus are extant, and of these only one is a poem. It is a didactic epistle to Seleucus, "On the Right Direction of his Studies and Life," and has been attributed to Gregory Nazianzen by some writers upon very inadequate evidence,—that adduced (the similar phraseology which conveys, in this poem and a poem of Gregory's, the catalogue of canonical scriptures), being as easily explained by the imitation of one poet, as by the identity of two. They differ, moreover, upon ground more important than phraseology: Amphilocheus appearing to reject, or at least to receive doubtfully, Jude's epistle and the Second of Peter. And there is a harsh force in the whole poem, which does not remind us of our Nazianzen, while it becomes, in the course of dissuading Seleucus from the amusements of the amphitheatre, graphic and effective. We hear, through the description, the grinding of the tigers' teeth, the sympathy of the people with the tigers showing still more savage.

B.P.

They sit unknowing of these agonies,
 Spectators at a show. When a man dies
 From a beast's jaw, they groan, as if at
 least.

They missed the ravenous pleasure, like
 the beast,
 And sat there vainly. When, in the
 next spring,
 The victim is attained, and, uttering
 The deep roar or quick shriek between
 the fangs,
 Beats on the dust the passion of his pangs,
 All pity dieth in that glaring look;
 They clap to see the blood run like a
 brook;
 They stare with hungry eyes, which tears
 should fill,
 And cheer the beasts on with their soul's
 good will;
 And wish more victims to their maw,
 and urge
 And lash their fury, as they shared the
 surge,
 Gnashing their teeth, like beasts, on flesh
 of men.

There is an appalling reality in this picture. The epistle consists of 333 lines, which we mention specifically, because the poet takes advantage of the circumstance to illustrate or enforce an important theological doctrine:—

Three hundred lines, three decades,
 monads three,
 Comprise my poem. *Love the Trinity.*

It would be almost a pain, and quite a regret, to pass from this fourth century without speaking a word which belongs to it—a word which rises to our lips, a word worthy of honour—HELIODORUS. Though a bishop and an imaginative writer, his "Æthiopica" has no claim on our attention, either by right of Christianity or poetry; and yet we may be pardoned on our part for love's sake, and on account of the false position into which, by negligence of readers or insufficiency of translators, his beautiful romance has fallen, if we praise it heartily and faithfully even here. Our tears praised it long ago, our recollection does so now, and its own pathetic eloquence and picturesque descriptiveness are ripe for any praise. It has, besides, a vivid Arabian Night charm, almost as charming as

Q Q

Scheherazade herself, suggestive of an Arabian Night story drawn out "in many a winding bout," and not merely on the ground of extemporaneous loving and methodical (must we say it?) *lying*. In good sooth—no, not in good sooth, but in evil leasing—every hero and heroine of them all, from Abou Hassan to "the divine Chariclæa," does lie most vehemently and abundantly by gift of nature and choice of author, whether bishop or sultana. "It is," as Pepys observes philosophically of the comparative destruction of gin-shops and churches in the Great Fire of London, "pretty to observe" how they all lie. And although the dearest of story-tellers, our own Chaucer, has told us that "some leasing is, of which there cometh none advantage to no wight," even that species is used by them magnanimously in its turn, for the bare glory's sake, and without caring for the "advantage." With equal liberality, but more truth, we write down the bishop of Tricca's romance *charming*, and wish the charm of it (however we may be out of place in naming him among poets) upon any poet who has not yet felt it, and whose eyes, giving honour, may wander over these Remarks. The poor bishop thought as well of his book as we do, perhaps better; for when commanded, under ecclesiastical censure, to burn it or give up his bishopric, he gave up the bishopric. And who blames Heliodorus? He thought well of his romance; he was angry with those who did not; he was weak with the love of it. Let whosoever blames, speak low. Romance-writers are not educated for martyrs, and the exacted martyrdom was very very hard. Think of that English bishop who burnt his hand by an act of volition—only his hand, and which was sure to be burnt afterwards; and how he was praised for it! Heliodorus had to do with a dearer thing—handwriting, not hands. Authors will pardon him, if bishops do not,

NONNUS of Panopolis, the poet of the "*Dionysiaca*," a work of some twenty-two thousand verses, on some twenty-two thousand subjects shaken together, flourished, as people say of many a dry-rooted soul, at the commencement of the fifth century. He was converted from paganism, but we are sorry to make the melancholy addition, that he was never converted from the "*Dionysiaca*." The only Christian poem we owe to him—a paraphrase, in hexameters, of the apostle John's gospel—does all that a bald verbosity and an obscure tautology can do or undo, to quench the divinity of that divine narrative. The two well-known words, bearing on their brief vibration the whole passion of a world saved through pain from pain, are thus *traded* :—

They answered Him
 "Come and behold." Then Jesus Him-
self groaned,
Dropping strange tears from eyes unused
to weep.

"Unused to weep!" Was it so of the Man of Sorrows? Oh, obtuse poet! We had translated the opening passage of the Paraphrase, and laid it by for transcription, but are repelled. Enough is said. Nonnus was never converted from the "*Dionysiaca*."

SYNESIUS of Cyrene learnt Plato's philosophy so well of Hypatia of Alexandria at the commencement of the fifth century, or rather before, that, to the obvious honour of that fair and learned teacher, he never, as bishop of Ptolemais, could attain to unlearning it. He did not wish to be bishop of Ptolemais; he had divers objections to the throne and the domination. He loved his dogs, he loved his wife; he loved Hypatia and Plato as well as he loved truth; and he loved beyond all things, under the womanly instruction of the former, to have his own way. He was a poet, too; the chief poet, we do not hesitate to record our opinion,—the chief, for true and natural gifts, of all our

Greek Christian poets; and it was his choice to pray lyrically between the dew and the cloud rather than preach dogmatically between the doxies. If Gregory shrank from the episcopal office through a meek self-distrust and a yearning for solitude, Synesius repulsed the invitation to it through an impatience of control over heart and life, and for the earnest joy's sake of thinking out his own thought in the hunting-grounds, with no deacon or disciple astuter than his dog to watch the thought in his face, and trace it backward or forward, as the case might be, into something more or less than what was orthodox. Therefore he, a man of many and wandering thoughts, refused the bishopric,—not weepingly, indeed, as Gregory did, nor feigning madness with another of the “*nolentes episcopari*” of that earnest period,—but with a sturdy enunciation of resolve, more likely to be effectual, of keeping his wife by his side as long as he lived, and of doubting as long as he pleased to doubt upon the resurrection of the body. But Synesius was a man of genius, and of all such true energies as are taken for granted in the name; and the very sullenness of his “*nay*” being expressive to grave judges of the faithfulness of his “*yea and amen*,” he was considered too noble a man not to be made a bishop of in his own despite, and on his own terms. The fact proves the latitude of discipline, and even of doctrine, permitted to the churches of that age; and it does not appear that the church at Ptolemais suffered any wrong as its result, seeing that Synesius, recovering from the shock militant of his ordination, in the course of which his ecclesiastical friends had “*laid hands upon him*” in the roughest sense of the word, performed his new duties willingly; was no sporting bishop otherwise than as a “*fisher of men*”—sent his bow to the dogs, and his dogs to Jericho, that nearest Coventry to Ptolemais, silencing his “*staunch hound's authentic voice*” as soon

as ever any importance became attached to the authenticity of his own. And if, according to the bond, he retained his wife and his Platonisms, we may honour him by the inference, that he did so for conscience' sake still more than love's, since the love was inoperative in other matters. For spiritual fervour and exaltation, he has honour among men and angels; and however intent upon spiritualising away the most glorified material body from “*the heaven of his invention*,” he held fast and earnestly, as anybody's clenched hand could a horn of the altar, the Homousion doctrine of the Christian heaven, and other chief doctrines emphasising the divine sacrifice. But this poet has a higher place among poets than this bishop among bishops; the highest, we must repeat our conviction, of all yet named or to be named by us as “*Greek Christian poets*.” Little, indeed, of his poetry has reached us, but this little is great in a nobler sense than of quantity; and when of his odes, Anacreontic for the most part, we cannot say praisefully that “*they smell of Anacreon*,” it is because their fragrance is holier and more abiding; it is because the human soul burning in the censer effaces from our spiritual perceptions the attar of a thousand rose-trees whose roots are in Teos. These odes have, in fact, a wonderful rapture and ecstasy. And if we find in them the phraseology of Plato, or Plotinus, for he leant lovingly to the later Platonists,—*nay*, if we find in them oblique references to the outworn mythology of paganism, even so have we beheld the mixed multitude of unconnected motes wheeling, rising in a great sunshine, as the sunshine were a motive energy,—and even so the burning, adoring poet-spirit sweeps upward the motes of world-fancies (as if, being in the world, their tendency was Godward) upward in a strong stream of sunny light, while she rushes into the presence of “*The Alone*.” We say the

spirit significantly in speaking of this poet's aspiration. His is an ecstasy of abstract intellect, of pure spirit, cold though impetuous; the heart does not beat in it, nor is the human voice heard; the poet is true to the heresy of the ecclesiastic, and there is no resurrection of the body. We shall attempt a translation of the ninth ode, closer if less graceful and polished than Mr. Boyd's, helping our hand to courage by the persuasion that the genius of its poetry must look through the thickest blanket of our dark.

Well-beloved and glory-laden,
Born of Solyma's pure maiden!
I would hymn Thee, blessed Warden,
Driving from Thy Father's garden
Blinking serpent's crafty lust,
With his bruised head in the dust!
Down Thou camest, low as earth,
Bound to those of mortal birth;
Down Thou camest, low as hell,
Where shepherd-Death did tend and keep
A thousand nations like to sheep,
While weak with age old Hades fell
Shivering through his dark to view Thee,
And the Dog did backward yell
With jaws all gory to let through Thee!
So, redeeming from their pain
Choirs of disembodied ones,
Thou didst lead whom Thou didst gather,
Upward in ascent again,
With a great hymn to the Father,
Upward to the pure white thrones!
King, the daemon tribes of air
Shuddered back to feel Thee there!
And the holy stars stood breathless,
Trembling in their chorus deathless;
A low laughter filled ether—
Harmony's most subtle sire
From the seven strings of his lyre
Stroke a measured music hither—
Io pean! victory!
Smiled the star of morning—he
Who smileth to foreshow the day!
Smiled Hesperus the golden,
Who smileth soft for Venus gay!
While that horned glory holden
Brimful from the fount of fire,
The white moon, was leading higher
In a gentle pastoral wise
All the nightly deities!
Yea, and Titan threw abroad
The far shining of his hair
'Neath Thy footsteps holy-fair,
Owning Thee the Son of God;
The Mind artificer of all,
And his own fire's original!

And Thou upon Thy wing of will
Mounting,—Thy God-foot uptill
The neck of the blue firmament,—
Soaring, didst alight content
Where the spirit-spheres were singing,
And the fount of good was springing,
In the silent heaven!
Where Time is not with his tide
Ever running, never weary,
Drawing earth-born things aside
Against the rocks; nor yet are given
The plagues death-bold that ride the dreary

Tost matter-depths. Eternity
Assumes the places which they yield!
Not aged, howso'er she held
Her crown from everlastingly—
At once of youth, at once of eld,
While in that mansion which is hers
To God and gods she ministers!

How the poet rises in his "singing clothes" embroidered all over with the mythos and the philosophy! Yet his eye is to the Throne: and we must not call him half a heathen by reason of a Platonic idiosyncrasy, seeing that the esoteric of the most suspicious turnings of his phraseology is "Glory to the true God." For another ode, Paris should be here to choose it—we are puzzled among the beautiful. Here is one with a thought in it from Gregory's prose, which belongs to Synesius by right of conquest:—

O my deathless, O my blessed,
Maid-born, glorious Son confessed,
O my Christ of Solyma!
I who earliest learnt to play
This measure for Thee, fain would bring
Its new sweet tune to cithern-string—
Be propitious, O my King!
Take this music which is mine
Anthem'd from the songs divine! •

We will sing Thee, deathless One,
God Himself and God's great Son—
Of sire of endless generations,
Son of manifold creations!
Nature mutually endued,
Wisdom in infinitude!
God, before the angels burning—
Corpse, among the mortals mourning!
What time Thou wast poured mild
From an earthy vase defiled,
Magi with fair arts besprent,
At Thy new star's orient,
Trembled inly, wondered wild,
Questioned with their thoughts abroad—
What then is the new-born child?
Who the hidden God?

God, or corpse, or king?
 Bring your gifts, oh hither bring
 Myrrh for rite—for tribute, gold—
 Frankincense for sacrifice!
 God! Thine incense take and hold!
 King! I bring thee gold of price!
 Myrrh with tomb will harmonise!

For Thou, entombed, hast purified
 Earthly ground and rolling tide,
 And the path of *dæmon* nations,
 And the free air's fluctuations,
 And the depth below the deep!
 Thou God, helper of the dead,
 Low as Hades didst Thou tread!
 Thou King, gracious aspect keep,
 Take this music which is mine,
 Anthem'd from the songs divine.

EUDOCIA—in the twenty-first year
 of the fifth century—wife of Theo-
 dosius, and empress of the world,
 thought good to extend her sceptre—

(*Hac claritate gemina
 O gloriosa femina!*)—

over Homer's poems, and cento-ise
 them into an epic on the Saviour's
 life. She was the third fair woman
 accused of sacrificing the world for
 an apple, having moved her husband
 to wrath, by giving away his imper-
 ial gift of a large one to her own
 philosophic friend Paulinus; and
 being unhappily more learned than
 her two predecessors in the sin, in
 the course of her exile to Jerusa-
 lem, she took ghostly comfort, by
 separating Homer's *εἰδωλον* from
 his *φρένες*. There she sat among
 the ruins of the holy city, addressing
 herself most unholily, with whatever
 good intentions and delicate fingers,
 to pulling Homer's gold to pieces
 bit by bit, even as the ladies of
 France devoted what remained to
 them of virtuous energy "pour
 parfiler" under the benignant gaze
 of Louis Quinze. She, too, who had
 no right of the purple to literary in-
 eptitude—she, born no empress of
 Rome, but daughter of Leontius
 the Athenian, what had she to do
 with Homer, "parfilant"? Was
 it not enough for Homer that he
 was turned once, like her own
 cast imperial mantle, by Apolinarius
 into a Jewish epic, but that he
 must be unpicked again by Eudocia
 for a Christian epic? The reader,

who has heard enough of centos,
 will not care to hear how she did it.
 That she did it was too much;
 and the deed recoiled. For mark
 the poetical justice of her destiny;
 let all readers mark it, and all
 writers, especially female writers,
 who may be, half as learned, and
 not half as fair,—that although
 she wrote many poems, one "On
 the Persian War," whose title and
 merit are recorded, not one, except
 this cento, has survived. The ob-
 literative sponge, we hear of in
Æschylus, has washed out every
 verse except this cento's "damned
 spot." This remains. This is called
 Eudocia! this stands for the daugh-
 ter of Leontius, and this only in
 the world! O fair mischief! she
 is punished by her hand.

And yet, are we born critics any
 more than she was born an empress,
 that we should not have a heart?
 and is our heart stone, that it should
 not wax soft within us while the
 vision is stirred "between our eye-
 lids and our eyes," of this beautiful
 Athenais, baptized once by Christian
 waters, and once by human tears,
 into Eudocia, the imperial mourner?
 —this learned pupil of a learned
 father, crowned once by her golden
 hair, and once by her golden crown,
 yet praised more for poetry and learn-
 ing than for beauty and greatness by
 such grave writers as Socrates and
 Evagrius, the ecclesiastical histo-
 rians?—this world's empress, pale
 with the purple of her palaces, an exile
 even on the throne from her Athens,
 and soon twice an exile, from father's
 grave and husband's bosom? We
 relent before such a vision. And
 what if, reluctantly, we declare
 her innocent of the Homeric cento?
 —what if we find her "a whipping
 boy" to take the blame?—what
 if we write down a certain Proba
 "improba," and bid her bear it?
 For Eudocia having been once a
 mark to slander, may have been so
 again; and Falconia Proba, having
 committed centoism upon Virgil,
 must have been capable of anything.
 The Homeric cento has been actually

attributed to her by certain critics, with whom we would join in all earnestness our most sour voices, gladly, for Eudocia's sake, who is closely dear to us, and malignly for Proba's, who was "improba" without our help. So shall we impute evil to only one woman, and she not an Athenian; while our worst wish, even to her, assumes this innoxious shape, that she had used a distaff rather than a stylus, though herself and the yet more "Sleeping Beauty" had owned one horoscope between them! Amen to our wish! A busy distaff and a sound sleep to Proba!

And now, that golden-haired, golden-crowned daughter of Leontius, for whom neither the much learning nor the much sorrow drove Hesperus from her sovran eyes—let her pass on unblenched. Be it said of her, softly as she goes, by all gentle readers—"She is innocent, whether for centos or for apples! She wrote only such Christian Greek poems as Christians and poets might rejoice to read, but which perished with her beauty, as being of one seed with it."

Midway in the sixth century we encounter PAUL SILENTIARIUS, called so in virtue of the office held by him in the court of Justinian, and chiefly esteemed for his descriptive poem on the Byzantine church of St. Sophia, which, after the Arian conflagration, was rebuilt gorgeously by the emperor. This church was not dedicated to a female saint, according to the supposition of many persons, but to the second person of the Trinity, the *ἀγία σοφία*—holy wisdom; while the poem being recited in the imperial presence, and the poet's gaze often forgetting to rise higher than the imperial smile, Paul Silentarius dwelt less on the divine dedication and the spiritual uses of the place, than on the glory of the dedicatrix and the beauty of the structure. We hesitate, moreover, to grant to his poem the praise which has been freely granted to it by more capable critics, of its power to realise

this beauty of structure to the eyes of the reader. It is highly elaborate and artistic; but the elaboration and art appear to us architectural far more than picturesque. There is no sequency, no congruity, no keeping, no light and shade. The description has reference to the working as well as to the work, to the materials as well as to the working. The eyes of the reader are suffered to approach the whole only in analysis, or rather in analysis analysed. Every part, part by part, is recounted to him excellently well—is brought close till he may touch it with his eyelashes; but when he seeks for the general effect, it is in pieces—there is none of it. Byron shows him more in the passing words—

I have beheld Sophia's bright roofs swell
Their glittering mass i' the sun—

than Silentarius in all his poem. Yet the poem has abundant merit in diction and harmony; and, besides higher noblenesses, the pauses are modulated with an artfulness not commonly attained by these later Greeks, and the ear exults in an unaccustomed rhythmic pomp which the inward critical sense is inclined to murmur at, as an expletive verbosity.

Whoever looketh with a mortal eye
To heaven's emblazoned forms, not
steadfastly
With unreverted neck can bear to measure
That meadow-round of star-apparelled
pleasure,
But drops his eyelids to the verdant hill,
Yearning to see the river run at will,
With flowers on each side,—and the
ripening corn,
And grove thick set with trees, and
flocks at morn
Leaping against the dews,—and olives
twined,
And green vine-branches, trailingy inclined,—
And the blue calmness skimmed by dripping oar
Along the Golden Horn.

But if he bring
His foot across this threshold, never more
Would he withdraw it; fain, with wandering

Moist eye, and ever-turning head, to
 stay,
 Since all satiety is driven away
 Beyond the noble structure. Such a
 fane
 Of blameless beauty hath our Cæsar
 raised
 By God's perfective grace, and not in
 vain!

O emperor, these labours we have praised,
 Draw down the glorious Christ's per-
 petual smile;
 For thou, the high-peaked Ossa didst
 not pile

Upon Olympus' head, nor Pelion throw
 Upon the neck of Ossa, opening so
 The ether to the steps of mortals! no!
 Having achieved a work more high than
 hope,

Thou didst not need these mountains as
 a slope

Whereby to scale the heaven! Wings
 take thee thither

From purest piety to highest ether.

The following passage, from the
 same "Description," is hard to turn
 into English, through the accumu-
 lative riches of the epithets. Greek
 words atone for their vainglorious
 redundancy by their beauty, but
 we cannot think so of these our own
 pebbles:—

Who will unclothe me Homer's sounding
 lips,

And sing the marble mead that over-
 sweeps

The mighty walls and pavements spread
 around

Of this tall temple, which the sun has
 crowned?

The hammer with its iron tooth was
 loosed

Into Carystus' summit green, and bruised
 The Phrygian shoulder of the dædal
 stone:—

This marble, coloured after roses fused
 In a white air, and that, with flowers
 thereon

Both purple and silver, shining tenderly!
 And that which in the broad fair Nile
 sank low

The barges to their edge, the porphyry's
 glow

Sown thick with little stars! and thou
 mayst see

The green stone of Laconia glitter free!
 And all the Carian hill's deep bosom
 brings,

Streaked bow-wise, with a livid white and
 red,—

And all the Lydian chasm keeps covered,
 A hueless blossom with a ruddier one

Soft mingled! all, besides, the Libyan
 sun

Warms with his golden splendour, till he
 make

A golden yellow glory for his sake,
 Along the roots of the Maurusian height!

And all the Celtic mountains give to
 sight

From crystal clefts: black marbles
 dappled fair

With milky distillations here and there!
 And all the onyx yields in metal-shine

Of precious greenness!—all that land of
 thine,

Ætolia, hath on even plains engendered
 But not on mountain-tops,—a marble
 rendered

Here nigh to green, of tints which
 emeralds use,

Here with a sombre purple in the hues!
 Some marbles are like new-dropt snow,
 and some

Alight with blackness!—Beauty's rays
 have come,

So congregate, beneath this holy dome!

And thus the poet takes us away
 from the church and dashes our
 senses and admirations down these
 marble quarries! Yet it is right
 for us to admit the miracle of a poem
 made out of stones! and when he
 spoke of unclosing Homer's lips
 on such a subject, he was probably
 thinking of Homer's ships, and
 meant to intimate that one catalogue
 was as good for him as another.

JOHN GEOMETRA arose in no
 propitious orient probably with the
 seventh century, although the time
 of his "elevation" appears to be
 uncertain within a hundred years.

He riseth slowly, as his sullen car
 Had all the weights of sleep and death
 hung on it.

Plato, refusing his divine fellow-
 ship to anyone who was not a geo-
 metrician or who was a poet, might
 have kissed our Johannes, who was
 not divine, upon both cheeks, in
 virtue of his other name and in vice
 of his verses. He was the author
 of certain hymns to the Virgin Mary,
 as accumulative of epithets and
 admirations as ten of her litanies,
 inclusive of a pious compliment,
 which, however geometrically exact
 in its proportions, sounds strangely.

O health to thee! new living car of the sky,
Affire on the wheels of four virtues at
once!

O health to thee! Seat, than the cherubs
more high,
More pure than the seraphs, *more*
broad than the thrones!

Towards the close of the last
hymn, the exhausted poet empties
back something of the ascription into
his own lap, by a remarkable "mihi
quoque."

O health to me, royal one! if there be-
long

Any grace to my singing, that grace is
from thee.

O health to me, royal one! if in my song
Thou hast pleasure, oh, thine is the
grace of the glee!

We may mark the time of GEORGE
PISIDA, about thirty years deep in
the seventh century. He has been
confounded with the rhetorical arch-
bishop of Nicomedia, but held the
office of scævophylax, only lower
than the highest, in the metropolitan
church of St. Sophia, and was a poet,
singing half in the church and half
in the court, and considerably
nearer to the feet of the Emperor
Heraclius than can please us in any
measure. Hoping all things, how-
ever, in our poetical charity, we
are willing to hope even this,—
that the man whom Heraclius carried
about with him as a singing-man
when he went to fight the Persians,
and who sang and recited according-
ly, and provided notes of admiration
for all the imperial notes of interro-
gation, and gave his admiring poems
the appropriate and suggestive name
of *acroases*—auscultations, things in-
tended to be heard,—might never-
theless love Heraclius the fighting-
man, not slave-wise or flatter-wise,
but man-wise or dog-wise, in good
truth, and up to the brim of his
praise; and so hoping, we do not
dash the praise down as a libation
to the infernal task-masters. Still
it is an impotent conclusion to a
free-hearted poet's musing on the
"Six Days' Work," to wish God's
creation under the sceptre of his
particular friend! It looks as if

the particular friend had an ear
like Dionysius, and the poet—ah,
the poet!—a mark as of a chain
upon his brow in the shadow of his
court laurel.

We shall not revive the question
agitated among his contemporaries,
whether Euripides or George Pisida
wrote the best iambics; but that
our George knew the secret of
beauty, and that, having noble
thoughts, he could utter them nobly,
is clear, despite of Heraclius. That
he is, besides, unequal; often coldly
perplexed when he means to be in-
genious, only violent when he seeks
to be inspired; that he premeditates
ecstasies, and is inclined to the
attitudes of the orators; in
brief, that he "not only" (and not
seldom) "sleeps but *snores*"—are
facts as true of him as the praise is.
His Hexaëmeron, to which we re-
ferred as his chief work, is rather a
meditation or rhythmical speech
upon the finished creation, than a
retrospection of the six days; and
also there is more of Plato in it than
of Moses. It has many fine things,
and whole passages of no ordinary
eloquence, though difficult to separ-
ate and select.

Whatever eyes seek God to view His
Light,

As far as they behold Him close in night!
Whoever searcheth with insatiate balls
Th' abysmal glare, or gazeth on Heaven's
walls

Against the fire-disc of the sun, the same
According to the vision he may claim,
Is dazzled from his sense. What soul of
flame

Is called sufficient to view onward thus
The way whereby the sun's light came
to us?

O distant Presence in fixed motion!
Known

To all men, and inscrutable to one:
Perceived—uncomprehended! unex-
plained

To all the spirits, yet by each attained,
Because its God-sight is Thy work! O
Presence,

Whatever holy greatness of Thine essence
Lie virtue-hidden, Thou hast given our
eyes

The vision of Thy plastic energies—
Not shown in angels only (those create

All fiery-hearted, in a mystic state
 (Of bodiless body) but, if order be
 Of natures more sublime than they or we,
 In highest Heaven, or mediate ether, or
 This world now seen, or one that came
 before

Or one to come,—quick in Thy purpose,
 —there!

Working in fire and water, earth and
 air—

In every tuneful star, and tree, and
 bird—

In all the swimming, creeping life un-
 heard,

In all green herbs, and chief of all, in
 MAN.

There are other poems of inferior
 length, "On the Persian War," in
 three books, or, alas, "auscultations,"
 —"The Heracliad," again on the
 Persian war, and in two (of course)
 auscultations again, — "Against
 Severus," "On the Vanity of Life,"
 "The War of the Huns," and others.
 From the "Vanity of Life," which
 has much beauty and force, we
 shall take a last specimen:—

Some yearn to rule the state, to sit above,
 And touch the cares of hate as near as
 love;

Some their own reason for tribunal take,
 And for all thrones the humblest prayers
 they make;

Some love the orator's vainglorious art,—
 The wise love silence and the hush of
 heart,—

Some to ambition's spirit-curse are fain,
 That golden apple with a bloody stain;
 While some do battle in her face (more
 rife

Of noble ends) and conquer strife with
 strife:

And while your groaning tables gladden
 these,

Satiety's quick chariot to disease,
 Hunger the wise man helps, to water,
 bread,

And light wings to the dreams about his
 head.

The truth becomes presently ob-
 vious, that—

The sage o'er all the world his sceptre
 waves,

And earth is common ground to thrones
 and graves.

JOHN DAMASCENUS, to whom we
 should not give by any private im-
 pulse of admiration the title of
 Chrysorrhoeas, accorded to him by
 his times, lived at Damascus, his

native city, early in the eighth cen-
 tury, holding an unsheathed sword
 of controversy until the point drew
 down the lightning. He retired
 before the affront rather than the
 injury; and in company with his
 beloved friend and fellow poet,
 Cosmas of Jerusalem (whose poetical
 remains the writer of these Remarks
 has vainly sought the sight of, and
 therefore can only, as by hearsay,
 ascribe some value to them), hid the
 remnant of his life in the monastery
 of Saba, where Phocas of the twelfth
 century looked upon the tomb of
 either poet. John Damascenus wrote
 several acrostics on the chief festivals
 of the churches, which are not much
 better, although very much longer,
 than acrostics need be. When he
 writes out of his heart, without
 looking to the first letters of his
 verses—as, indeed, in his Anacreontic
 his eyes are too dim for iota hunting,
 —he is another man, and almost a
 strong man; for the heart being
 sufficient to speak, we want no
 Delphic oracle—"Pan is not dead."
 In our selection from the Anacreontic
 hymn, the tears seem to trickle
 audibly; we welcome them as a
 Castalia, or, rather, "as Siloa's
 brook," flowing by an oracle more
 divine than any Grecian one:—

From my lips in their defilement,
 From my heart in its beguilement,
 From my tongue which speaks not fair,
 From my soul stained everywhere,
 O my Jesus, take my prayer!

Spurn me not for all it says,
 Not for words and not for ways,
 Not for shamelessness endured!
 Make me brave to speak my mood,
 O my Jesus, as I would!
 Or teach me, which I rather seek,
 What to do and what to speak.

I have sinned more than she,
 Who learning where to meet with Thee,
 And bringing myrrh, the highest-
 priced,

Anointed bravely, from her knee,
 Thy blessed feet accordingly,

My God, my Lord, my Christ!
 As Thou saidest not "Depart,"

To that suppliant from her heart,
 Scorn me not, O Word, that art
 The gentlest one of all words said!
 But give Thy feet to me instead,

That tenderly I may them kiss
 And clasp them close, and never miss
 With over-dropping tears, as free
 And precious as that myrrh could be,
 I' anoint them bravely from my knee!
 Wash me with my tears: draw nigh me,
 That their salt may purify me.
 Thou remit my sins who knowest
 All the sinning to the lowest—
 Knowest all my wounds, and seest
 All the stripes Thyself decreest;
 Yea, but knowest all my faith,
 Seest all my force to death,
 Hearest all my wailings low,
 That mine evil should be so!
 Nothing hidden but appears
 In Thy knowledge, O Divine,
 O Creator, Saviour mine—
 Not a drop of falling tears,
 Not a breath of inward moan,
 Not a heart-beat—which is gone!

After this deep pathos of Christianity, we dare not say a word; we dare not even praise it as poetry: our heart is stirred, and not "idly." The only sound which can fitly succeed the cry of the contrite soul is that of Divine condonation or of angelic rejoicing. Let us, who are sorrowful still, be silent too.

Although doubts, as broad as four hundred years, separate the earliest and latest period talked of as the age of SIMEON METAPHRASTES by those "virii illustrissimi" the classical critics, we may set him down, without much peril to himself or us, at the close of the tenth century, or very early in the eleventh. He is chiefly known for his "Lives of the Saints," which have been lifted up as a mark both for honour and dishonour; which Psellus hints at as a favourite literature of the angels, which Leo Allatius exalts as chafing the temper of the heretics, and respecting which we, in an exemplary serenity, shall straightway accede to one-half of the opinion of Bellarmine—that the work speaketh not as things actually happened, but as they might have happened—"non ut res gestæ fuerant, sed ut geri potuerant." Our half of this weighty opinion is the first clause—we demur upon "ut geri potuerant,"—and we need not go further than the former to win a light of commentary for

the term "metaphrases," applied to the saintly biographies in otherwise a doubtful sense, and worn obliquely upon the sleeve of the biographer Metaphrastes, in no doubtful token of his skill in metamorphosing things as they were into things as they might have been. And Simeon having received from Constantinople the honour of his birth within her walls, and returning to her the better honour of the distinctions and usefulness of his life,—so writeth Psellus, his encomiast, with a graceful turn of thought,—expired in an "odour of sanctity" befitting the biographer of all the saints,—breathing out from his breathless remains such an incense of celestial sweetness, that if it had not been for the maladroitness of certain unfragrant persons whose desecration of the next tomb acted instantly as a stopper, the whole earth might at this day be *metaphrased* to our nostrils, as steeped in an attar-gul of Eden or Ede!—we might be dwelling in a phoenix-nest at this day. Through the maladroitness, however, in question, there is lost to us every sweeter influence from the life and death of Simeon Metaphrastes than may result from the lives and deaths of his saints, and from other works of his, whether commentaries, orations, or poems; and we cannot add that the aroma from his writings bears any proportion in value to the fragrance from his sepulchre. Little of his poetry has reached us, and we are satisfied with the limit. There were three Simeons, who did precede our Simeon, as the world knoweth, and whose titles were Stylitæ or Columnarii, because it pleased them in their saintly volition to take the highest place and live out their natural lives supernaturally, each upon the top of a column. Peradventure the columns which our Simeon refused to live upon conspired against his poetry: peradventure it is on their account that we find ourselves between two alphabetic acrostics, written solemnly by his hand, and take up one

wherein every alternate line begins with a letter of the alphabet; its companion in the couplet being left to run behind it, out of livery and sometimes out of breath. Will the public care to look upon such a curiosity? Will our verse-writers care to understand what harm may be done by a conspiracy of columns—gods and men quite on one side? And will candid readers care to confess at last, that there is an earnestness in the poem, acrostic as it is,—a leaning to beauty's side,—which is above the acrosticism? Let us try:—

Ah, tears upon mine eyelids, sorrow on mine heart,

I bring Thee soul-repentance, Creator as Thou art!

Bounding joyous actions, deep as arrows go;

Pleasures self-revolving, issue into woe!

Creatures of our mortal, headlong rush to sin:

I have seen them; of them—ah me,—I have been!

Duly pitying Spirits, from your spirit-frame,

Bring your cloud of weeping,—worthy of the same!

Else I would be bolder; if that light of Thine,

Jesus, quell the evil, let it on me shine!

Fail me truth, is living, less than death forlorn,

When the sinner readeth—"better be unborn?"

God, I raise toward Thee both eyes of my heart,

With a sharp cry—"Help me!"—while mine hopes depart.

Help me! Death is bitter, all hearts comprehend;

But I fear beyond it—end beyond the end.

Inwardly behold me, how my soul is black:

Sympathise in gazing, do not spurn me back!

Knowing that Thy pleasure is not to destroy,

That Thou fain wouldst save me—this is all my joy.

Lo, the lion, hunting spirits in their deep, (Stand beside me!) roareth—(help me!) nears to leap!

Mayst Thou help me, Master: Thou art pure alone,

Thou alone art sinless, one Christ on a throne.

Nightly deeds I loved them, hated day's instead;

Hence this soul-involving darkness on mine head.

O Word, Who constrainest things estranged and curst,

If Thy hand can save me, that work were the first!

Pensive o'er my sinning, counting all its ways,

Terrors shake me, waiting adequate dismays.

Quenchless glories many, hast Thou—many a rod—

Thou, too, hast Thy measures. Can I bear Thee, God?

Send away my counting from my soul's decline,

Show me of the portion of those saved of Thine!

Slow drops of my weeping to Thy mercy run:

Let its rivers wash me, by that mercy won!

Tell me what is worthy, in our dreary now, As the future glory? (madness!) what, as Thou?

Union, oh, vouchsafe me to Thy fold beneath,

Lest the wolf across me gnash his gory teeth!

View me, judge me gently! spare me, Master bland.

Brightly lift Thine eyelids, kindly stretch Thine hand!

Winged and choral angels! 'twixt my spirit lone,

And all deathly visions, interpose your own!

Yea, my Soul, remember death and woe inwrought—

After-death affliction, wringing earth's to nought!

Zone me, Lord, with graces! Be foundations built

Underneath me; save me! as Thou know'st and wilt!

The omission of our X (in any case too sullen a letter to be employed in the service of an acrostic) has permitted us to write line for line with the Greek; and we are able to infer, to the honour of the Greek poet, that, although he did not live upon a column, he was not far below one, in the virtue of self-mortification. We are tempted to accord him some more gracious and serious justice, by breaking away a passage from his "Planctus Mariæ," the lament of Mary on embracing the Lord's

body; and giving a moment's insight into a remarkable composition, which, however deprived of its poetical right of measure, is, in fact, nearer to a poem, both in purpose and achievement, than any versified matter we have looked upon from this metaphrastic hand:—

"O, uncovered corse, yet Word of the Living One! self-doomed to be uplifted on the cross for the drawing of all men unto Thee,—what member of Thine hath no wound? O my blessed brows, embraced by the thorn-wreath which is pricking at my heart! O beautiful and priestly One, Who hadst not where to lay Thine head and rest, and now wilt lay it only in the tomb, resting *there*; sleeping, as Jacob said, a lion's sleep! O cheeks turned to the smiter! O lips, new hive for bees, yet fresh from the sharpness of vinegar and bitterness of gall! O mouth, wherein was no guile, yet betrayed by the traitor's kiss! O hand, creative of man, yet nailed to the cross, and since, stretched out unto Hades, with help for the first transgressor! O feet, once walking on the deep to hallow the waters of nature! O me, my Son!

... Where is Thy chorus of sick ones?—those whom Thou didst cure of their diseases, and bring back from the dead? Is none here, but only Nicodemus, to draw the nails from those hands and feet?—none here, but only Nicodemus, to lift Thee from the cross, heavily, heavily, and lay Thee in these mother-arms, which bore Thee long ago, in Thy babyhood, and were glad *then*? These hands, which swaddled Thee then, let them bind Thy grave-clothes now. And yet,—O bitter funerals!—O Giver of life from the dead, liest Thou dead before mine eyes? Must I, who said 'hush' beside Thy cradle, wail this passion upon Thy grave? I, who washed Thee in Thy first bath, must I drop on Thee these hotter tears? I, who raised Thee high in my maternal arms,—but *then* Thou leapedst,—*then* Thou springedst up in Thy child-play!"

It is better to write so than to stand upon a column. And, although the passage does, both generally and specifically, in certain of its ideas, recall the antithetic eloquence of that Gregory Nazianzen before whom this Simeon must be dumb, we have touched his "oration," so called, nearer than our subject could permit us to do any of Gregory's, because the "Planctus" involves an imagined situation, is poetical in its design. Moreover, we must prepare to look downwards; the poets were descending from the gorgeous majesty of the hexameter and the severe simplicity of iambics, down through the mediate *versus politici*, a loose metre, adapted to the popular ear, to the lowest deep of a "measured prose,"—which has been likened, but which *we* will not liken, to the blank verse of our times. Presently, we may offer an example from Psellus of a prose acrostic—the reader being delighted with the prospect! "A whole silver threepence, mistress."

MICHAEL PSELLUS lived midway in the eleventh century, and appears to have been a man of much aspiration toward the higher places of the earth. A senator of no ordinary influence, preceptor of the Emperor Michael previous to that accession, he is supposed to have included in his instructions the advantages of sovereignty, and in his precepts the most subtle means of securing them. We were about to add, that his acquirements as a scholar were scarcely less imperial than those of his pupil as a prince; but the expression might have been inappropriate. There are cases not infrequent, not entirely opposite to the present case, and worthy always of all meditation by such intelligent men as affect extensive acquisition,—when acquirements are not ruled by the man, but rule him. Whatever originates from the mind cannot obstruct her individual faculty; nay, whatever she receives inwardly and marks her power over by creating out of it a *tertium quid*,

according to the law of the perpetual generation of spiritual verities, is not obstructive but impulsive to the evolution of faculty; but the erudition, whether it be erudition as the world showed it formerly, or miscellaneous literature, as the world shows it now, the accumulated acquirement of whatever character, which remains *extraneous* to the mind, is and must be in the same degree an obstruction and deformity. How many are there from Psellus to Bayle, bound hand and foot intellectually with the rolls of their own papyrus—men whose erudition has grown stronger than their souls! How many whom we would gladly see washed in the clean waters of a little ignorance, and take our own part in their refreshment! Not that knowledge is bad, but that wisdom is better; and that it is better and wiser in the sight of the angels of knowledge to think out one true thought with a thrush's song and a green light for all lexicon (or to think it without the light and without the song—because truth is beautiful, where they are not seen or heard)—than to mummy our benumbed souls with the circumvolutions of twenty thousand books. And so Michael Psellus was a learned man.

We have sought earnestly, yet in vain,—and the fact may account for our ill-humour,—a sight of certain iambics upon vices and virtues, and Tantalus and Sphinx, which are attributed to this writer, and cannot be in the moon after all:—earnestly, yet with no fairer encouragement to our desire than what befalls it from his *poems* "On the Councils," the first of which, and only the first, through the softness of our charities, we bring to confront the reader:—
Know the holy councils, King, to their utmost number,
Such as roused the impious ones from their world-wide slumber!
Seven in all those councils were: Nice the first containing,
When the godly master-soul Constantine was reigning,
What time at Byzantium, hallowed with the hyssop,

In heart and word, Metrophanes presided as archbishop!
It cut away Arius' tongue's maniacal delusion,
Which cut off from the Trinity the blessed Homousion—
Blasphemed (O miserable man!) the maker of the creature,
And low beneath the Father cast the equal Filial nature.

The prose acrostic, contained in an office written by Psellus to the honour of Simeon, is elaborated on the words "I sing thee who didst write the metaphrases;" every sentence being insulated, and beginning with a charmed letter.

Say in a dance how we shall go,
Who never could a measure know?

why, thus—(and yet Psellus, who did *know* everything, wrote a synopsis of the metres!)—why, thus:—

"Inspire me, Word of God, with a rhythmic chant, for I am borne onward to praise Simeon Metaphrastes and Logothetes, as he is fitly called, the man worthy of admiration!

"Solemnly from the heavenly heights did the Blessed Ghost descend on thee, wise one, and finding thine heart pure, rested there, there verily in the body!"

Surely we need not write any more. But Michael Psellus was a very learned man.

JOHN OF EUCHAITA (or Euchania, or Theodoropolis,—the three names do appear through the twilight to belong to one city) was a bishop, probably contemporary with Psellus—is only a poet now: we turn to see the voice which speaks to us. It is a voice with a soul in it, clear and sweet and living; and we who have walked long in the desert, leap up to its sound as to the dim flowing of a stream, and would take a deep breath by its side both for the weariness which is gone and the repose which is coming. But it is a rarer thing than a stream in the desert: it is a voice in the desert—the only voice of a city. The city may have three names, as we have said, or the three names may more fitly appertain to three cities—scholars knit their brows and

wax doubtful as they talk ; but a city denuded of its multitudes it surely is, ruined even of its ruins it surely is : no exhalation arises from its tombs, the foxes have lost their way to it, the bittern's cry is as dumb as the vanished population—only the Voice remains. John Mauropus, of Euchaita, Euchania, Theodoropolis—one living man among many dead, as the Arabian tale goes of the city of enchantment—one speechful voice among the silent, sole survivor of the breath which maketh words, effluence of the soul replacing the bittern's cry—speak to us ! And thou shalt be to us as a poet ; we will salute thee by that high name. For have we not stood face to face with Michael Psellus and him of the metaphrases ? Surely as a poet may we salute *thee* !

His poetry has, as if in contrast to the scenery of circumstances in which we find it, or to the fatality of circumstances in which it has *not* been found (and even Mr. Clarke in his learned work upon Sacred Literature, which is, however, incommunicative generally upon sacred poetry, appears unconscious of his being and his bishopric)—his poetry has a character singularly vital, fresh, and serene. There is nothing in it of the rapture of inspiration, little of the operativeness of art—nothing of imagination in a high sense, or of ear-service in any : he is not, he says, of those—Who rain hard with redundancies of words,

And thunder and lighten out of eloquence. His Greek being opposed to that of the Silentiarii and the Pisidæ by a peculiar simplicity and ease of collocation which the reader feels lightly in a moment, the thoughts move through its transparency with a certain calm nobleness and sweet living earnestness, with holy upturned eyes and human tears beneath the lids, till the reader feels lovingly too. We startle him from his reverie with an octave note on a favourite literary fashion of the living London, drawn from the voice of the lost city ; discovering by that sound the first serial

illustrator of pictures by poems, in the person of our Johannes. Here is a specimen from an annual of Euchaita, or Euchania, or Theodoropolis—we may say “annual” although the pictures were certainly not in a book, but were probably ornaments of the beautiful temple in the midst of the city, concerning which there is a tradition. Here is a specimen selected for love's sake, because it “illustrates” a portrait of Gregory Nazianzen :—

What meditates thy thoughtful gaze, my father ?
To tell me some new truth ? Thou canst not so !
For all that mortal hands are weak to gather
Thy blessed books unfolded long ago.

These are striking verses, upon the Blessed among women, weeping :—

O Lady of the passion, dost thou weep ?
What help can we then through our tears survey,
If such as thou a cause for wailing keep ?
What help, what hope, for us, sweet Lady, say ?
“ Good man, it doth befit thine heart to lay

More courage next it, having seen me so.
All other hearts find other balm to-day—
The whole world's consolation is my woe ! ”

Would any hear what can be said of a Transfiguration before Raffael's :—

Tremble, spectator, at the vision won thee !

Stand afar off, look downward from the height,

Lest Christ too nearly seen should lighten on thee,

And from thy fleshly eyeballs strike the sight,

As Paul fell ruined by that glory white !
Lo, the disciples prostrate, each apart,
Each impotent to bear the lamping light !

And all that Moses and Elias might,
The darkness caught the grace upon her heart

And gave them strength for ! *Thou, if evermore*

A God-voice pierce thy dark,—rejoice, adore !

Our poet was as unwilling a bishop as the most sturdy of the “ nolentes ” ;

and there are poems written both in

depreciation of, and in retrospective regret for, the ordaining dignity, marked by noble and holy beauties which we are unwilling to pass without extraction. Still we are constrained for space, and must come at last to his chief individual characteristic—to the gentle humanities which, strange to say, preponderate in the solitary voice—to the familiar smiles and sighs which go up and down in it to our ear. We will take the poem "To his old house," and see how the house survives by his good help, when the sun shines no more on the golden statue of Constantine :—

O be not angry with me, gentle house,
That I have left thee empty and deserted !

Since thou thyself that evil didst arouse,
In being to thy masters so false-hearted,

In loving none of those who did possess thee,

In ministr'ing to no one to an end,
In no one's service caring to confess thee,
But loving still the change of friend for friend,

And sending the last, plague-wise, to the door!

And so, or ere thou canst betray and leave me,

I, a wise lord, dismiss thee, servitor,
And antedate the wrong thou mayst achieve me

Against my will, by what my will allows ;
Yet not without some sorrow, gentle house !

For oh, beloved house, what time I render

My last look back on thee I grow more tender !

Pleasant possession, hearth for father's age,

Dear gift of buried hands, sole heritage !
My blood is stirred ; and love, that learnt its play

From all sweet customs, moves mine heart thy way !

For thou wast all my nurse and helpful creature,

For thou wast all my tutor and my teacher ;

In thee through lengthening toils I struggled deep,

In thee I watched all night without its sleep,

In thee I worked the wearier daytime out,

Exalting truth, or trying by a doubt.

And oh, my father's roof ! the memory leaves

Such pangs as break mine heart, beloved eaves ;

But God's word conquers all ! . .

He is forced to a strange land,
reverting with this benediction to the "dearest house" :—

Farewell, farewell, mine own familiar one,
Estranged for evermore from this day's sun,

Fare-thee-well so ! Farewell, O second mother,

O nurse and help,—remains there not another !

My bringer-up to some sublimer measure
Of holy childhood and perfected pleasure !
Now other spirits must thou tend and teach,

And minister thy quiet unto each,
For reasoning uses, if they love such use,
But nevermore to me ! God keep thee, house,

God keep thee, faithful corner, where I drew

So calm a breath of life ! And God keep you,

Kind neighbours ! Though I leave you by His grace,

Let no grief bring a shadow to your face ;
Because whate'er He willeth to be done
His will makes easy, makes the distant—

one,
And soon brings all embraced before His throne !

We pass PHILIP SOLITARIUS, who lived at the close of this eleventh century, even as we have passed one or two besides of his fellow-poets : because they, having hidden themselves beyond the reach of our eyes and the endeavour of our hands, and we being careful to speak by knowledge rather than by testimony, nothing remains to us but this same silent passing—this regretful one, as our care to do better must testify—albeit our fancy will not, by any means, account them, with all their advantages of absence, "the best part of the solemnity."

Early in the twelfth century we are called to the recognition of THEODORE PRODROMUS, theologian, philosopher, and poet. His poems are unequal, consisting principally of a

series of tetrastichs (Greek epigrams for lack of point, French epigrams for lack of poetry) upon the Old and New Testaments, and the Life of Chrysostom,—all nearly as bare of the rags of literary merit as might be expected from the design; and three didactic poems upon Love, Providence, and against Bareus the heretic, into which the poet has cast the recollected life of his soul. The soul deports herself as a soul should, with a vivacity and energy which work outward and upward into eloquence. The sentiments are lofty, the expression free; there is an instinct to a middle and an end. Music we miss, even to the elementary melody: the poet thinks his thoughts, and speaks them; not indeed what all poets, so called, do esteem a necessary effort, and indeed what we should thank him for doing; but he *sings* them in nowise, and they are not of that divine order which are crowned by right of their divinity with an inseparable aureole of sweet sound. His poem upon Love,—*φιλία* says the Greek word, but friendship does not answer to it,—is a dialogue between the personification and a stranger. It opens thus dramatically, the stranger speaking:—

Love! Lady diademed with honour,
whence
And whither goest thou? Thy look
presents
Tears to the lid, thy mien is vext and low,
Thy locks fall wildly from thy drooping
brow,
Thy blushes are all pale, thy garb is fit
For mourning in, and shoon and zone are
loose!
So changed thou art to sadness every
whit,
And all that pomp and purple thou didst
use,
That seemly sweet, that new rose on
the mouth,
Thou fair-smoothed tresses, and that
graceful zone,
Bright sandals, and the rest thou haddest
on,
Are all departed, gone to nought to-
gether!
And now thou walkest mournful in the
train
Of mourning women!—where and whence,
again?

Love. From earth to God my Father.
Stranger. Dost thou say
That earth of Love is desolated?
Love. Yea!
It so much scorned me.
Stranger. Scorned?
Love. And cast me out
From its door.
Stranger. From its door?
Love. As if without
I had my lot to die!

Love consents to give her confidence to the wondering stranger; whereupon, as they sit in the shadow of a tall pine, she tells a Platonic story of all the good she had done in heaven before the stars, and the angels, and the throned Triad, and of all her subsequent sufferings on the melancholy and ungrateful earth. The poem, which includes much beauty, ends with a quaint sweetness in the troth-plighting of the stranger and the lady. Mayst thou have been faithful to that oath, O Theodore Prodromus! but thou didst swear "too much to be believed—so much."

The poems "On Providence" and "Against Bareus" exceed the "Love," perhaps, in power and eloquence to the full measure of the degree in which they fall short of the interest of the latter's design. Whereupon we dedicate the following selection from the "Providence" to Mr. Carlyle's "gigmen" and all "respectable persons":—

Ah me! what tears mine eyes are welling
forth,
To witness in this synagogue of earth
Wise men speak wisely while the scoffers
sing,
And rich men folly, for much honouring!
Melitus stifles—Socrates decrees
Our further knowledge! Death to So-
crates,
And long life to Melitus! . . .
Chiefdom of evil, gold! blind child of
clay,
Gnawing with fixed tooth earth's heart
away!
Go! perish from us! objugation vain
To soulless nature, powerless to contain
One ill untrust upon it! Rather perish
That turpitude of crowds, by which they
cherish

Bad men for their good fortune, or condemn,
Because of evil fortune, virtuous men!

Oh, for a trumpet-mouth! an iron tongue
Sufficient for all speech! foundations hung

High on Parnassus' top to bear my feet!
So from that watch-tower, words which shall be meet,

I may out-thunder to the nations near me—

"Ye worshippers of gold, poor rich men, hear me!

Where do ye wander?—for what object stand?

That gold is earth's ye carry in your hand,

And floweth earthward! bad men have its curse

The most profusely! would yourselves be worse

So to be richer?—better in your purse? Your royal purple—'twas a dog that found it!

Your pearl of price—a sickened oyster owned it!

Your glittering gems are pebbles, dust—astray;

Your palace pomp was wrought of wood and clay,

Smoothed rock and moulded plinth! earth's clay, earth's wood,

Earth's common-hearted stones! Is this your mood,

To honour *earth*, to worship *earth*, nor blush?

What dost thou murmur, savage mouth? Hush, hush,

Thy wrath is vainly breathed. The depth to tread

Of God's deep judgments, was not Paul's, he said.

The "savage mouth" speaks in power, with whatever harshness:

and we are tempted to contrast with this vehement utterance another

short poem by the same poet, a little quaint withal, but light, soft, almost

tuneful,—as written for a "Book of Beauty," and that not of Euchaïta!

The subject is "LIFE."

Oh, take me, thou mortal,—thy LIFE for thy praiser!

Thou hast met, found and seized me, and know'st what my ways are.

Nor leave me for slackness, nor yield me for pleasure,

Nor look up too saintly, nor muse beyond measure!

There's the veil from my head—see the worst of my mourning!

There are wheels to my feet!—have a dread of their turning!

There are wings round my waist—I may flatter and flee thee!

There are yokes on my hands—fear the chains I decree thee!

Hold *me*! hold a shadow, the winds as they quiver;

Hold *me*! hold a dream, smoke, a track on the river.

Oh, take me, thou mortal,—thy Life for thy praiser,

Thou hast met not and seized not, nor know'st what my ways are!

Nay, frown not, and shrink not, nor call me an aspen;

There's the veil from my head! I have dropped from thy clasp!

A fall-back within it I soon may afford thee;

There are wheels to my feet—I may roll back toward thee!

There are wings round my waist—I may flee back and clip thee!

There are yokes on my hands—I may soon cease to whip thee!

Take courage! I rather would hearten than hip thee!

JOHN TZETZA divides the twelfth century with his name, which is not a great one.

In addition to an iambic fragment upon education, he has written indefatigably in the metre

politicus, what must be read, if read at all, with a corresponding energy.

—thirteen "chiliads," of "variae historiae," so called after Ælian's,—

Ælian's without the "honey-tongue,"—very various histories indeed, about

crocodiles and flies, and Plato's philosophy and Cleopatra's nails, and Sam-

son and Phidias, and the resurrection from the dead, and the Calydonian

boar,—“everything under the sun” being, in fact, their imperfect epitome.

The omission is simply POETRY! there is no apparent consciousness

of her entity in the mind of this versifier; no aspiration towards her

presence, not so much as a sigh upon her absence. We do not, indeed,

become aware, in the whole course of this laborious work, of much

unfolding of faculty—take it lower than the poetical; of nothing much

beyond an occasional dry, sly, somewhat boorish humour, which being

good humour besides, would not be a bad thing were its traces only more extended. But the general level of the work is a dull talkativeness, a prosy adversity, who is no "Daughter of Jove," and a slumberousness without a dream. We adjudge to our reader the instructive history of the Phoenix.

A phoenix is a single bird and synchronous with nature ;

The peacock cannot equal him in beauty or in stature !

In radiance he outshines the gold ; the world in wonder yieldeth ;

His nest he fixeth in the trees, and all of spices buildeth.

And when he dies, a little worm, from out his body twining,

Doth generate him back again when'er the sun is shining.

He lives in Egypt, and he dies in Ethiopia only, as

Asserts Philostratus, who wrote the Life of Apollonius.

And (as the wise Egyptian scribe, the holy scribe Charemon,

Hath entered on these Institutes, all centre their esteem on)

Seven thousand years and six of age, this phoenix of the story

Expireth from the fair Nile side, whereby he had his glory !

In the early part of the fourteenth century, MANUEL PHILE, pricked emulously to the heart by the successful labours of Tzetza, embraced into identity with himself the remaining half of Ælian, and developed in his poetical treatise "On the Properties of Animals," to which Isachimus Camerarius provided a conclusion—the "Natural History" of that industrious and amusing Greek-Roman. The Natural History is translated into verse, but by no means glorified ; and yet the poet of animals, Phile, has carried away far more of the Ælian honey clinging to the edges of his *paterna* than the poet of the Chiliads did ever wot of. What we find in him is not beauty, what we hear in him is not music, but there is an open feeling for the beautiful which stirs at a word, and we have a scarcely confessed contentment in hearkening to those twice-told stories of birds and beasts and fishes, mea-

sured out to us in the low monotony of his chanting voice. Our selections shall say nothing of the live grasshopper, called, with the first breath of this paper, an emblem of the vital Greek tongue ; because the space left to us closes within our sight, and the science of the age does not thirst to receive, through our hands, the history of grasshoppers, according to Ælian or Phile either. Everybody knows what Phile tells us here, that grasshoppers live upon morning dew, and cannot sing when it is dry. Everybody knows that the lady grasshopper sings not at all. And if the moral, drawn by Phile from this latter fact, of the advantage of silence in the female sex generally, be true and important, it is also too obvious to exact our enforcement of it. Therefore we pass by the grasshopper, and the nightingale too, for all her fantastic song ; an hasten to introduce to European naturalists a Philhellenic species of *heron*, which has escaped the researches of Cuvier, and the peculiarities of which may account to the philosophic reader for that instinct of the "wisdom of our forefathers," which established an English university in approximation with the Fens. It is earnestly to be hoped that the nice ear in question for the Attic dialect may still be preserved among the herons of Cambridge-shire :—

A Grecian island nourisheth to bless

A race of herons in all nobleness.

If some barbarian bark approach the shore,

They hate, they flee,—no eagle can out-soar !

But if by chance an Attic voice be wist, They grow softhearted straight, philhellenist ;

Press on in earnest flocks along the strand,

And stretch their wings out to the comer's hand.

Perhaps he hears them with a gentle mind,—

They love his love, though foreign to their kind !

For so the island giveth winged teachers, In true love lessons, to all wingless creatures.

He has written, besides, "A

Dialogue between Mind and Phile," and other poems; and we cannot part without taking from him a more solemn tone, which may sound as an "Amen" to the good we have said of him. The following address to the Holy Spirit is concentrated in expression:—

O living Spirit, O falling of God-dew,
O Grace which dost console us and renew,
O vital light, O breath of angelhood,
O generous ministration of things good,
Creator of the visible, and best
Upholder of the great unmanifest
Power infinitely wise, new boon sublime
Of science and of art, constraining might,
In whom I breathe, live, speak, rejoice,
and write,—
Be with us in all places, for all time!

"And now," saith the patientest reader of all, "you have done. Now we have watched out the whole night of the world with you, by no better light than these poetical rushlights, and the wicks fail, and the clock of the universal hour is near upon the stroke of the seventeenth century, and you have surely done!" Surely *not*, we answer; for we see a hand which the reader sees not, which beckons us over to Crete, and clasps within its shadowy fingers a roll of hymns Anacreontical, written by MAXIMUS MARGUNIUS: and not for the last of our readers would we lose this last of the Greeks, owing him salutation. Yet the hymns have, for the true Anacreontic fragrance, a musty odour, and we have scant praise for them in our nostrils. Their inspiration is from Gregory Nazianzen, whose "Soul and Body" are renewed in them by a double species of transmigration; and although we kiss the feet of Gregory's high excellences, we cannot admit any one of them to be a safe conductor of poetical inspiration. And, in union with Margunius's plagiaristic tendencies, there is a wearisome lengthiness, harder to bear. He will knit you to the whole length of a "*Honi soit qui mal y pense*," till you fall asleep to the humming of the stitches what time you should be reading the "moral." We ourselves once

dropped into a "distraction," as the French say,—for nothing could be more different from what the English say, than our serene state of self-abnegation,—at the beginning of a house-building by this Maximus Margunius: when, reading on some hundred lines with our bare bodily eyes, and our soul starting up on a sudden to demand a measure of the progress, behold, he was building it still, with a trowel in the same hand: it was not forwarder by a brick. The swallows had time to hatch two nestfuls in a chimney while he finished the chimney-pot! Nevertheless he has moments of earnestness, and they leave beauties in their trace. Let us listen to this extract from his fifth hymn:—

Take me as a hermit lone
With a desert life and moan;
Only Thou anear to mete
Slow or quick my pulse's beat;
Only Thou, the night to chase
With the sunlight in Thy face!
Pleasure to the eyes may come
From a glory seen afar,
But if life concentre gloom
Scattered by no little star,
Then, how feeble, God, we are!
Nay, whatever bird there be,
(Ether by his flying stirred,)
He, in this thing, must be free—
And I, Saviour, am Thy bird,
Pricking with an open beak
At the words that Thou dost speak!
Leave a breath upon my wings,
That above these nether things
I may rise to where Thou art,
I may flutter next Thine heart!
For if a light within me burn,
It must be darkness in an urn,
Unless, within its crystalline,
That unbeginning light of Thine
Shine!—oh, Saviour, let it shine!

He is the last of our Greeks. The light from Troy city, with which all Greek glory began, "threw three-times six," said Æschylus, that man with a soul,—beacon after beacon, into the heart of Greece. "Three-times six," too, threw the light from Greece, when her own heart-light had gone out like Troy's, onward along the ridges of time. Three times six—but what faint beacons are the last!—sometimes only a red

brand; sometimes only a small trembling flame; sometimes only a white glimmer as of ashes breathed on by the wind; faint beacons and far! How far! We have watched them along the cloudy tops of the great centuries, through the ages dark but for them,—and now stand looking with eyes of farewell upon the last pale sign on the last mist-bound hill. But it is the sixteenth century. Beyond the ashes of the hill a red light is gathering; above

the falling of the dews a great sun is rising: there is a rushing of life and song upward—let it still be UPWARD! Shakespeare is in the world! And the Genius of English Poetry, she who only of all the earth is worthy (Goethe's spirit may hear us say so, and smile), stooping, with a royal gesture, to kiss the dead lips of the Genius of Greece, stands up her successor in the universe, by virtue of that chrism, and in right of her own crown.

THE BOOK OF THE POETS

THE voice of the turtle is heard in the land. The green book of the earth is open, and the four winds are turning the leaves: while Nature, chief secretary to the creative Word, sits busy at her inditing of many a lovely poem,—her "Flower and the Leaf" on this side, her "Cuckoo and the Nightingale" on that, her "Paradise of Dainty Devices" in and out among the valleys, her "Polyolbion" away across the hills, her "Britannia's Pastorals" on the home meadows, her sonnets of tufted primroses, her lyrical outgoings of May blossoming, her epical and didactic solemnities of light and shadow, and many an illustrative picture to garnish the universal annual. What book shall we open side by side with Nature's? First, the book of God. "The Book of the Poets" may well come next—even this book, if it deserve indeed the nobility of its name.

But this book, which is not Campbell's "Selection from the British Poets," nor Southey's, nor different from either by being better, resembles many others of the nobly named, whether princes or hereditary legislators, in bearing a name too noble for its deserts. This book, consisting of short extracts from the books of the poets, beginning with Chaucer, ending with Beattie, and missing sundry by the way,—we call it indefinitely "A book of the poets,"

and leave it thankful. The extracts from Chaucer are topsy-turvy—one from the "Canterbury Tales," prologue thrown in between two from the Knight's Tale; while Gower may blame "his fortune"—

(And some men hold opinion
That it is constellation,)

for the dry specimen crumbled off from his manmountainism. Of Lydgate there is scarcely a page; of Occleve, Hawes, and Skelton—the two last especially interesting in poetical history,—of Sackville, and the whole generation of dramatists, not a word. "The table is not full," and the ringing on it of Phillips's "Splendid Shilling" will not bribe us to endurance. What! place for Pomfret's platitudes, and no place for Shakespeare's divine sonnets? and no place for Jonson's and Fletcher's lyrics? Do lyrics and sonnets perish out of place whenever their poets make tragedies too, quenched by the entity of tragedy? We suggest that Shakespeare has nearly as much claim to place in any possible book of the poets (though also a book of the poetasters) as ever can have John Hughes, who "as a poet, is chiefly known," saith the critical editor, "by his tragedy of the 'Siege of Damascus.'" Let this book therefore accept our boon, and remain a book of the poets, thankfully if not

gloriously,—while we, on our own side, may be thankful too, that in the present days of the millennium of Jeremy Bentham—a more literally golden age than the laureates of Saturnus dreamed withal,—any memory of the poets should linger with the booksellers, and “come up this way” with the spring. The thing is good, in that it is at all. Send a little child into a garden, and he will be sure to bring you a nosegay worth having, though the red weed in it should “side the lily,” and sundry of the prettiest flowers be held stalk upwards. Flowers are flowers and poets are poets, and “A book of the poets” must be right welcome at every hour of the clock.

For the preliminary essay, which is very moderately well done, we embrace it, with our fingers at least, in taking up the volume. It pleases us better on the solitary point of the devotional poets than Mr. Campbell's beautiful treatise, doing, as it seems to us, more frank justice to the Witherses, the Quarleses, and the Crashaws. Otherwise the criticism and philosophy to be found in it are scarcely of the happiest,—although even the first astonishing paragraph which justifies the utility of poetry on the ground of its being an attractive variety of language, a persuasive medium for abstract ideas (as reasonable were the justification of a seraph's essence deduced from the cloud beneath his foot!)—shall not provoke us back to discontent from the vision of the poets of England, suggested by the title of this “Book,” and stretching along gloriously to our survey.

Our poetry has an heroic genealogy. It arose, where the sun rises, in the far East. It came out from Arabia, and was tilted on the lance-heads of the Saracens into the heart of Europe, Armorica catching it in rebound from Spain, and England from Armorica. It issued in its first breath from Georgia, wrapt in the gathering-cry of Persian Odin: and passing from the orient of the sun to the antagonistic snows of Iceland, and oversweeping the black pines

of Germany and the jutting shores of Scandinavia, and embodying in itself all wayside sounds, even to the rude shouts of the brazen-throated Cimbri,—so modified, multiplied, resonant in a thousand Runic echoes, it rushed abroad like a blast into Britain. In Britain, the Arabic Saracenic Armoric, and the Georgian Gothic Scandinavian mixed sound at last; and the dying suspirations of the Grecian and Latin literatures, the last low stir of the “Gesta Romanorum,” with the apocryphal personations of lost authentic voices, breathed up together through the fissures of the rent universe, to help the new intonation and accomplish the cadence. Genius was thrust onward to a new slope of the world. And soon, when simpler minstrels had sat there long enough to tune the ear of the time,—when Layamon and his successors had hummed long enough, like wild bees, upon the lips of our infant poetry predestined to eloquence,—then Robert [*sic*, but ? William] Langland, the monk, walking for cloister “by a wode's syde,” on the Malvern Hills, took counsel with his holy “Plowman,” and sang of other visions than their highest ridge can show. While we write, the woods upon those beautiful hills are obsolete, even as Langland's verses; scarcely a shrub grows upon the hills! but it is well for the thinkers of England to remember reverently, while, taking thought of her poetry, they stand among the gorse,—that if we may boast now of more honoured localities, of Shakespeare's “rocky Avon,” and Spenser's “soft-streaming Thames,” and Wordsworth's “Rydal Mere,” still our first holy poet-ground is there.

But it is in Chaucer we touch the true height, and look abroad into the kingdoms and glories of our poetical literature,—it is with Chaucer that we begin our “Books of the Poets,” our collections and selections, our pride of place and name. And the genius of the poet shares the character of his position: he was.

made for an early poet, and the metaphors of dawn and spring doubly become him. A morning-star, a lark's exaltation, cannot usher in a glory better. The "cheerful morning face," "the breezy call of incense-breathing morn," you recognise in his countenance and voice: it is a voice full of promise and prophecy. He is the good omen of our poetry, the "good bird," according to the Romans, "the best good angel of the spring," the nightingale, according to his own creed of good luck, heard before the cuckoo.

Up rose the sunne, and uprose Emilie, and uprose her poet, the first of a line of kings, conscious of futurity in his smile. He is a king and inherits the earth, and expands his great soul smilingly to embrace his great heritage. Nothing is too high for him to touch with a thought, nothing too low to dower with an affection. As a complete creature cognate of life and death, he cries upon God,—as a sympathetic creature he singles out a daisy from the universe ("si douce est la marguerite"), to lie down by half a summer's day and bless it for fellowship. His senses are open and delicate, like a young child's—his sensibilities capacious of super-sensual relations, like an experienced thinker's. Child-like, too, his tears and smiles lie at the edge of his eyes, and he is one proof more among the many, that the deepest pathos and the quickest gaieties hide together in the same nature. He is too wakeful and curious to lose the stirring of a leaf, yet not too wide awake to see visions of green and white ladies between the branches; and a fair house of fame and a noble court of love are built and holden in the winking of his eyelash. And because his imagination is neither too "high fantastical" to refuse proudly the gravitation of the earth, nor too "light of love" to lose it carelessly, he can create as well as dream, and work with clay as well as cloud; and when his men and women stand close by the actual ones, your stop-

watch shall reckon no difference in the beating of their hearts. He knew the secret of nature and art,—that truth is beauty,—and saying "I will make 'A Wife of Bath' as well as Emilie, and you shall remember her as long," we do remember her as long. And he sent us a train of pilgrims, each with a distinct individuality apart from the pilgrimage, all the way from Southwark and the Tabard Inn, to Canterbury and Becket's shrine: and their laughter comes never to an end, and their talk goes on with the stars; and all the railroads which may intersect the spoilt earth for ever, cannot hush the "tramp, tramp" of their horses' feet.

Controversy is provocative. We cannot help observing, because certain critics observe otherwise, that Chaucer utters as true music as ever came from poet or musician; that some of the sweetest cadences in all our English are extant in his—"swete upon his tongue" in completest modulation. Let "Denham's strength and Waller's sweetness join" the Io pæan of a later age, the "*eurekamen*" of Pope and his generation. Not one of the "Queen Anne's men," measuring out tuneful breath upon their fingers, like ribbons for topknots, did know the art of versification as the old rude Chaucer knew it. Call him rude for the picturesqueness of the epithet; but his verse has, at least, as much regularity in the sense of true art, and more manifestly in proportion to our increasing acquaintance with his dialect and pronunciation, as can be discovered or dreamed in the French school. Critics indeed have set up a system based upon the crushed atoms of first principles, maintaining that poor Chaucer wrote by accent only! Grant to them that he counted no verses on his fingers; grant that he never disciplined his highest thoughts to walk up and down in a paddock—ten paces and a turn; grant that his singing is not after the likeness of their sing-song: but there end your admissions. It is our ineffaceable impression, in fact,

that the whole theory of accent and quantity held in relation to ancient and modern poetry stands upon a fallacy; totters rather than stands; and that when considered in connection with such old moderns as our Chaucer, the fallaciousness is especially apparent. Chaucer wrote by quantity, just as Homer did before him, just as Goethe did after him, just as all poets must. Rules differ, principles are identical. All rhythm presupposes quantity. Organ-pipe, or harp, the musician plays by time. Greek or English, Chaucer or Pope, the poet sings by time. What is this accent but a stroke, an emphasis, with a successive pause to make complete the time? And what is the difference between this accent and quantity but the difference between a harp-note and an organ-note? otherwise, quantity expressed in different ways? It is as easy for matter to subsist out of space, as music out of time.

Side by side with Chaucer comes Gower, who is ungratefully disregarded too often, because side by side with Chaucer. He who rides in the king's chariot will miss the people's "hic est." Could Gower be considered apart, there might be found signs in him of an independent royalty, however his fate may seem to lie in waiting for ever in his brother's antechamber, like Napoleon's tame kings. To speak our mind, he has been much undervalued. He is nailed to a comparative degree; and everybody seems to make it a condition of speaking of him, that something be called inferior within him, and something superior out of him. He is laid down flat, as a dark background for "throwing out" Chaucer's lights; he is used as a *πρὸς ὅτι* for leaping up into the empyrean of Chaucer's praise. This is not just nor worthy. His principal poem, the "Confessio Amantis," preceded the "Canterbury Tales," and proves an abundant fancy, a full head and full heart, and neither ineloquent. We do not praise its design,—in which the father-confessor is set up

as a storyteller, like the Bishop of Tricca, "avec l'âme," like the Cardinal de Retz, "le moins ecclésiastique du monde,"—while we admit that he tells his stories as if born to the manner of it, and that they are not much the graver, nor, peradventure, the holier either, for the circumstance of the confessorship. They are indeed told gracefully and pleasantly enough, and if with no superfluous life and gesture, with an active sense of beauty in some sort, and as flowing a rhythm as may bear comparison with many octosyllabics of our day; Chaucer himself having done more honour to their worth as stories than we can do in our praise, by adopting and crowning several of their number for king's sons within his own palaces. And this recalls that, at the opening of one glorious felony, the "Man of Lawe's Tale," he has written, a little unlawfully and ungratefully considering the connection, some lines of harsh significance upon poor Gower,—whence has been conjectured by the grey gossips of criticism, a literary jealousy, an unholy enmity, nothing less than a soul-chasm between the contemporary poets. We believe nothing of it: no, nor of the Shakespeare and Jonson feud after it—

To alle such cursed stories we saie fy.

That Chaucer wrote in irritation is clear: that he was angry seriously and lastingly, or beyond the pastime of passion spent in a verse as provoked by a verse, there appears to us no reason for crediting. But our idea of the nature of the irritation will expound itself in our idea of the offence, which is here in Dan Gower's proper words, as extracted from the *Ladie Venus's* speech in the "Confessio Amantis."

And grete well Chaucer when ye mete,
As my disciple and poëte!—

Forthy now in his daies old,
Thou shalt him tellé this message,
That he upon his latter age,
To sette an ende of alle his werke
As he who is mine owné clerke,
Do make his testament of love.

We would not slander Chaucer's temper,—we believe, on the contrary, that he had the sweetest temper in the world,—and still it is our conviction, none the weaker, that he was far from being entirely pleased by this "message." We are sure he did not like the message, and not many poets would. His "elvish countenance" might well grow dark, and "his sugred mouth" speak somewhat sourly, in response to such a message. Decidedly, in our own opinion, it was an impertinent message, a provocative message, a most inexcusable and odious message! Waxing hotter ourselves the longer we think of it, there is the more excuse for Chaucer. For, consider, gentle reader! this indecorous message preceded the appearance of the "Canterbury Tales," and proceeded from a rival poet in the act of completing his principal work,—its plain significance being "I have done my poem, and you cannot do yours because you are superannuated." And this, while the great poet addressed was looking forward farther than the visible horizon, his eyes dilated with a mighty purpose. And to be counselled by this, to shut them forsooth, and take his crook and dog and place in the valleys like a grey shepherd of the Pyrenees—he, who felt his foot strong upon the heights! he, with no wrinkle on his forehead deep enough to touch the outermost of inward smooth dreams—he, in the divine youth of his healthy soul, in the quenchless love of his embracing sympathies, in the untired working of his perpetual energies,—to "make an ende of alle his werke" and be old, as if he were not a poet! "Go to, O vain man,"—we do not reckon the age of the poet's soul by the shadow on the dial! Enough that it falls upon his grave.

Occleve and Lydgate both breathed the air of the world while Chaucer breathed it, although surviving him so long as rather to take standing as his successors than contemporaries. Both called him

"master" with a faithful reverting tenderness, and, however we are bound to distinguish Lydgate as the higher poet of the two, Occleve's "Alas" may become the other's lips—

Alas, that thou thine excellent prudence
In thy bed mortell mightest not be-
queath!

For alas! it is not bequeathed. Lydgate's "Thebaid," attached by its introduction to "the Canterbury Tales," gives or enforces the occasion for sighing comparisons with the master's picturesque vivacity, while equally in delicacy and intenseness we admit no progress in the disciple. He does, in fact, appear to us so much overrated by the critics, that we are tempted to extend to his poetry his own admission on his monkish dress,—

I wear a habit of perfection
Although my life agree not with that
same,

and to opine concerning the praise and poetry taken together, that the latter agrees not with that same. An elegant poet—"poeta elegans"—was he called by the courteous Pits,—a questionable compliment in most cases, while the application in the particular one agrees not with that same. An improver of the language he is granted to be by all; and a voluminous writer of respectable faculties, in his position, could scarcely help being so: he has flashes of genius, but they are not prolonged to the point of warming the soul,—can strike a bold note, but fails to hold it on,—attains to moment of power and pathos, but wears, for working days, no habit of perfection.

These are our thoughts of Lydgate; and yet when he ceased his singing, none sang better; there was silence in the land. In Scotland, indeed, poet-tongues were not all mute; the air across the Border "gave delight and hurt not." Here in the South it was otherwise: and unless we embrace in our desolation such poems as the rhyming chronicles of Harding and Fabian, we must hearken for music to the clashing of "Bilboa

blades," and be content that the wars of the Red and White Roses should silence the warbling of the nightingales. That figure dropped to our pen's point, and the reader may accept it as a figure—as no more. To illustrate by figures the times and the seasons of poetical manifestation and decay, is at once easier and more reasonable than to attempt to account for them by causes. We do not believe that poets multiply in peace-time like sheep and sheaves, nor that they fly, like partridges, at the first beating of the drum; and we do believe, having a previous faith in the pneumatic character of their gift, that the period of its bestowment is not subject to the calculations of our philosophy. Let, therefore, the long silence from Chaucer and his disciples down to the sixteenth century, be left standing as a fact undisturbed by any good reasons for its existence, or by any other company than some harmless metaphor—harmless and ineffectual as a glow-worm's glitter at the foot of a colossal statue of Harpocrates. Call it, if you please, as Warton does, "a nipping frost succeeding a premature spring;" or call it, because we would not think our Chaucer premature, or the silence cruel—the trance of English Poetry: her breath, once emitted creatively, indrawn and retained,—herself sinking into deep sleep, like the mother of Apollonius before the glory of a vision, to awaken, to leap up (*ἐξέθορες* says Philostratus, the narrator) in a flowery meadow, at the clapping of the white wings of a chorus of encircling swans. We shall endeavour to realise this awaking.

Is Hawes a swan? a black (letter) swan? Certain voices will "say nay, say nay;" and already, and without our provocation, he seems to us unjustly depreciated. Warton was called "the indulgent historian of our poetry," for being so kind as to discover "one fine line" in him! What name must the over kind have, in whose susceptible memories whole passages stand up erect, claiming the

epithet or the like of the epithet,—and that, less as the largess of the inculgent than the debt of the just? Yet Langland's "Piers Plowman," and Chaucer's "House of Fame," and Lydgate's "Temple of Glasseye," and the "Pastyme of Plesure," by Stephen Hawes, are the four columnar marbles, the four allegorical poems, on whose foundation is exalted into light the great allegorical poem of the world, Spenser's "Faery Queen." There was a force of suggestion which preceded Sackville's, and Hawes uttered it. His work is very grave for a pastime, being a course of instruction upon the seven sciences, the trivium and quadrivium of the schools; whereby Grand Amour, scholar and hero, wooing and winning Belle Pucelle, marries her according to the *lex ecclesiæ*, is happy "all the rest of his life" by the *lex* of all matrimonial romances,—and, at leisure and in old age, dies by the *lex naturæ*. He tells his own story quite to an end, including the particulars of his funeral and epitaph; and is considerate enough to leave the reader in full assurance of his posthumous reputation. And now let those who smile at the design dismiss their levity before the poet's utterance:—

O mortall folke, you may beholde and see
Howe I lye here, sometime a mighty knight.

The ende of joye and all prosperitie
Is death at last thorough his course
and might.

After the day there cometh the dark night,

For though the day appear ever so long,
At last the bell ringeth to even song

—it "ringeth" in our ear with a soft and solemn music to which the soul is prodigal of echoes. We may answer for the poetic faculty of its "maker." He is, in fact, not merely ingenious and fanciful, but abounds—the word, with an allowance for the unhappiness of his subject, is scarcely too strong,—with passages of thoughtful sweetness and cheerful tenderness, at which we are constrained to smile and sigh, and both for "pastyme."

Was never payne but it had joye at laste
In the fayre morrow.

There is a lovely cadence ! And then Amour's courtship of his "swete ladie"—a "cynosure" before Milton's !—conducted as simply, yet touchingly, as if he were innocent of the seven deadly sciences, and knew no more of "the Ladye Grammere" than might become a troubadour :—

O swete ladie, the true and perfect star
Of my true heart ! O take ye now pitie !
Think on my payne which am tofore you
here,—

With your swete eyes behold you me, and
see

How thought and woe by great extremitie
Hath changed my colour into pale and
wan !

It was not so when I to love began.

The date assigned to this "Pastyme of Plesure" is 1506, some fifty years before the birth of Spenser. Whether it was written in vain for Spenser, judge ye. To the present generation it is covered deep with the dust of more than three centuries, and few tongues ask above the place,— "What lies here ?"

Barclay is our next swan ; and verily might be mistaken, in any sort taken, by naturalists, for a crow. He is our first writer of eclogues, the translator of the "Ship of Fools," and a thinker of his own thoughts with sufficient intrepidity.

Skelton "floats double, swan and shadow," as poet laureate of the University of Oxford, and "royal orator" of Henry VII. He presents a strange specimen of a court-poet, and if, as Erasmus says, "*Britannicarum literarum lumen*" at the same time,—the light is a pitchy torchlight, wild and rough. Yet we do not despise Skelton : despise him ? it were easier to hate. The man is very strong ; he triumphs, foams, is rabid, in the sense of strength ; he mesmerises our souls with the sense of strength—it is as easy to despise a wild beast in a forest, as John Skelton, poet laureate. He is as like a wild beast as a poet laureate can be. In his wonderful

dominion over language, he tears it, as with teeth and paws, ravenously, savagely : devastating rather than creating, dominant rather for liberty than for dignity. It is the very *sansculottism* of eloquence ; the oratory of a Silenus drunk with anger only. Mark him as the satyr of poets ! fear him as the Juvenal of satyrs ! and watch him with his rugged, rapid, picturesque savageness, his "breathless rhymes," to use the fit phrase of the satirist Hall, or—

His rhymes all ragged,
Tattered, and jagged,

to use his own,—climbing the high trees of Delphi, and pelting from thence his victim underneath, whether priest or cardinal, with rough-rinded apples ! And then ask, could he write otherwise than so ? The answer is this opening to his poem of the "Bouge of Court," and the impression inevitable, of the serious sense of beauty and harmony to which it gives evidence.

In autumn when the sun in *virgine*
By radiant heat enripened hath our corne,
When Luna, full of mutabilitie,
As emperesse, the diadem hath worne
Of our pole Arctic, smiling as in scorn
At our folie and our unstedfastnesse—

but our last word of Skelton must be, that we do not doubt his influence for good upon our language. He was a writer singularly fitted for beating out the knots of the cordage, and straining the lengths to extension ; a rough worker at rough work. Strong, rough Skelton ! We can no more deride him than my good lord cardinal could. If our critical eyebrows must motion contempt at somebody of the period, we choose Tusser, and his "Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry and Housewifery." Whatever we say of Tusser, no fear of harming a poet,—

Make ready a bin
For chaff to lie in,

and there may be room *therein*, in compliment to the author of the proposition, for his own verses.

Lord Surrey passes as the tuner

of our English nearly up to its present pitch of delicacy and smoothness; and we admit that he had a melody in his thoughts which they dared not disobey. That he is, as has been alleged by a chief critic, "our first metrical writer," lies not in our creed; and even Turberville's more measured praise,—

Our mother tongue by him hath got such
lyght
That ruder speche thereby is banisht
qwyht,—

we have difficulty in accepting. We venture to be of opinion that he did not belong to that order of master-minds with whom transitions originate, although qualified, by the quickness of a yielding grace, to assist effectually a transitional movement. There are names which catch the proverbs of praise as a hedge-thorn catches sheep's wool, by position and approximation rather than adaptitude: and this name is of them. Yet it is a high name. His poetry makes the ear lean to it, it is so sweet and low; the English he made it of being ready to be sweet, and falling ripe in sweetness into other hands than his. For the poems of his friend, Sir Thomas Wyatt, have more thought, freedom and variety, more general earnestness, more of the attributes of masterdom, than Lord Surrey's; while it were vain to reproach for lack of melody the writer of that loveliest lyric, "My lute, be still." And Wyatt is various in metres, and the first song-writer (that praise we must secure to him) of his generation. For the rest, there is an inequality in the structure of his verses which is very striking and observable in Surrey himself: as if the language, consciously insecure in her position, were balancing her accentual being and the forms of her pronunciation, half giddily, on the very turning point of transition. Take from Wyatt such a stanza as this, for instance,—

The long love that in my thoughts I
harbour,
And in my heart doth keep his residence,

Into my face presseth with bold pretence,
And there campeth, displaying his
banner,

and oppose to it the next example,
polished as Pope,—

But I am here in Kent and Christendom,
Among the Muses where I read and
rhyme;

Where, if thou list, mine own John Pains,
to come,
Thou shalt be judge how I do spend my
time.

It is well to mark Wyatt as a leader in the art of didactic poetic composition under the epistolary form, "sternly milde" (as Surrey said of his countenance) in the leaning toward satire. It is very well to mark many of his songs as of exceeding beauty, and as preserving clear their touching simplicity from that plague of over-curious conceits which infest his writings generally. That was the plague of Italian literature transmitted by contagion, together with better things—together with the love of love-lore, and the sonnet structure, the summer-bower for one fair thought, delighted in and naturalised in England by Wyatt and Surrey. For the latter,—

From Tuscan came his ladye's worthy
race:

and his Muse as well as Geraldine. Drops from Plato's cup, passing through Petrarch's, not merely perfumed and coloured but diluted by the medium, we find in Surrey's cup also. We must not underpraise Surrey to balance the overpraise we murmur at. Denying him supremacy as a reformer, the denial of his poetic nobleness is far from us. We attribute to him the chivalry of the *light* ages; we call him a scholastic troubadour. The longest and most beautiful of his poems ("describing the lover's whole state") was a memory in the mind of Milton when he wrote his "Allegro." He has that measure of pathos whose expression is no gesture of passion, but the skilful fingering on a well-tuned lute. He affects us at worst not painfully, and

With easie sighs such as folks draw in love.

He wrote the first English blank verse, in his translation of two books of the *Æneid*. He leads, in seeming, to the ear of the world, and by predestination of "popular breath," that little choral swan-chant which, swelled by Wyatt, Vaux, Bryan, and others, brake the common air in the days of the eighth Henry. And he fulfilled in sorrow his awarded fate as a poet, his sun going down at noon—and the cleft head, with its fair youthful curls, testifying like that fabled head of Orpheus to the music of the living tongue.

Sackville, Lord Dorset, takes up the new blank verse from the lips of Surrey, and turns it to its right use of tragedy. We cannot say that he does for it much more. His "Gorboduc," with some twenty years between it and Shakespeare, is farther from the true drama in versification and all the rest, than "Gammer Gurton" is from "Gorboduc." Sackville's blank verse, like Lord Surrey's before him, is only heroic verse without rhyme: and we must say so in relation to Gascoigne, who wrote the second blank verse tragedy, the "Jocasta," and the first blank verse original poem, "The Steele Glass." The secret of the blank verse of Shakespeare, and Fletcher, and Milton, did not dwell with them: the arched cadence, with its artistic keystone and underflood of broad continuous sound, was never achieved nor attempted by its first builders. We sometimes whisper in our silence that Marlowe's "brave sublunary" instincts should have groped that way. But no! Chaucer had more sense of music in the pause than Marlowe had. Marlowe's rhythm is not, indeed, hard and stiff and uniform, like the sentences of "Gorboduc," as if the pattern-one had been cut in boxwood: there is a difference between uniformity and monotony, and he found it; his cadence revolves like a wheel, progressively if slowly and heavily, and with an

orbicular grandeur of unbroken and unvaried music.

It remains to us to speak of the work by which Sackville is better known than by "Gorboduc,"—the "Mirror for Magistrates." The design of it has been strangely praised, seeing that whatever that peculiar merit were, Lydgate's "Fall of Princes" certainly cast the shadow before. But Sackville's commencement of the execution proved the master's hand; and that the great canvas fell abandoned to the blurring brushes of inadequate disciples, was an ill-fortune compensated adequately by the honour attributed to the Induction—of inducing a nobler genius than his own, even Spenser's, to a nobler labour. We cannot doubt the influence of that Induction. Its colossal figures, in high allegorical relief, were exactly adapted to impress the outspread fancy of the most sensitive of poets. A yew-tree cannot stand at noon in an open pleasureance without throwing the outline of its branches on the broad and sunny grass. Still, admitting the suggestion in its fulness, nothing can differ more than the allegorical results of the several geniuses of Lord Dorset and Spenser. Tear-drop and dew-drop respond more similarly to analysis; or morbid grief and ideal joy. Sackville stands close wrapt in the "blanket of his dark," and will not drop his mantle for the sun. Spenser's business is with the lights of the world, and the lights beyond the world.

But this Sackville, this Earl of Dorset ("Oh, a fair earl was he!"), stands too low for admeasurement with Spenser: and we must look back, if covetous of comparisons, to some one of a loftier and more kingly stature. We must look back far, and stop at Chaucer. Spenser and Chaucer do naturally remind us of each other, they two being the most cheerful-hearted of the poets—with whom cheerfulness, as an attribute of poetry, is scarcely a common gift. But the world will be upon us! The world moralises of

late and in its fashion, upon the immorality of mournful poems, upon the criminality of "melodious tears," upon the morbidness of the sorrows of poets,—because Lord Byron was morbidly sorrowful, and because a crowd of his ephemeral imitators hung their heads all on one side and were insincerely sorrowful. The fact, however, has been, apart from Lord Byron and his disciples, that the "ai ai" of Apollo's flower is vocally sad in the prevailing majority of poetical compositions. The philosophy is, perhaps, that the poetic temperament, half-way between the light of the ideal and the darkness of the real, and rendered by each more sensitive to the other, and unable, without a struggle, to pass out clear and calm into either, bears the impress of the necessary conflict in dust and blood. The philosophy may be, that only the stronger spirits do accomplish this victory, having lordship over their own genius; whether they accomplish it by looking bravely to the good ends of evil things, which is the practical ideal, and possible to all men in a measure—or by abstracting the inward sense from sensual things and their influences, which is subjectivity perfected—or by glorifying sensual things with the inward sense, which is objectivity transfigured—or by attaining to the highest vision of the idealist, which is subjectivity turned outward into an actual objectivity.

To the last triumph Shakespeare attained; but Chaucer and Spenser fulfilled their destiny and grew to their mutual likeness as cheerful poets, by certain of the former processes. They two are alike in their cheerfulness, yet are their cheerfulnesses most unlike. Each poet laughs: yet their laughter ring with as far a difference as the sheep-bell on the hill and the joy-bell in the city. Each is earnest in his gladness: each active in persuading you of it. You are persuaded, and hold each for a cheerful man. The whole difference is, that Chaucer has a cheerful humanity: Spenser, a

cheerful idealism. One rejoices walking on the sunny side of the street: the other walking out of the street in a way of his own, kept green by a blessed vision. One uses the adroitness of his fancy by distilling out of the visible universe her occult smiles: the other by fleeing beyond the possible frown, the occasions of natural ills, to that "cave of cloud" where he may smile safely to himself. One holds festival with men—sceldom so coarse and loud indeed, as to startle the deer from their green covert at Woodstock—or with homely Nature and her "douce marguerite" low in the grasses: the other adopts, for his playfellows, imaginary or spiritual existences, and will not say a word to Nature herself, unless it please her to dress for his masque and speak daintily sweet and rare like a spirit. The human heart of one utters oracles; the imagination of the other speaks for his heart, and we miss no prophecy. For music, we praised Chaucer's, and not only as Dryden did, for "a Scotch tune." But never issued there from lip or instrument, or the tuned causes of nature, more lovely sound than we gather from our Spenser's art. His mouth is vowed away from the very possibilities of harshness. Right leans to wrong in its excess. His rhythm is the continuity of melody, not harmony, because too smooth for modulation—because "by his vow" he dares not touch a discord for the sake of consummating a harmony. It is the singing of an angel in a dream: it has not enough of contrary for waking music. Of his great poem we may say that we miss no humanity in it, because we make a new humanity out of it and are satisfied in our human hearts—as new humanity vivified by the poet's life, moving in happy measure to the chanting of his thoughts, and upon ground supernaturally beautified by his sense of the beautiful. As an allegory, it enchants us away from its own purposes. Una is Una to us; and Sans Foy is a traitor, and Error is "an ugly monster," with a

"taile;" and we thank nobody in the world, not even Spenser, for trying to prove it otherwise. Do we dispraise an allegorical poem by throwing off its allegory? we throw not. Probably, certainly to our impression, the highest triumph of an allegory, from this of the "Faery Queen," down to the "Pilgrim's Progress," is the abnegation of itself.

Oh those days of Elizabeth! We call them the days of Elizabeth, but the glory fell over the ridge, in illumination of the half-century beyond: those days of Elizabeth! Full were they of poets as the summer days are of birds,—

No branch on which a fine bird did not sit,
No bird but his sweet song did shrilly sing,
No song but did containe a lovely dit.

We hear of the dramatists, and shall speak of them presently; but the lyric singers were yet more numerous,—there were singers in every class. Never since the first nightingale brake voice in Eden arose such a jubilee-concert: never before nor since has such a crowd of true poets uttered true poetic speech in one day. Not in England evermore! Not in Greece, that we know. Not in Rome, by what we know. Talk of their Augustan era—we will not talk of it, lest we desecrate our own of Elizabeth. The latter was rightly prefigured by our figure of the chorus of swans. It was besides the Milky Way of poetry: it was the miracle age of poetical history. We may fancy that the master-souls of Shakespeare and Spenser, breathing, stirring in divine emotion, shot vibratory life through other souls in electric association: we may hear, in fancy, one wind moving every leaf in a forest—one voice responded to by a thousand rock-echoes. Why, a common man walking through the earth in those days grew a poet by position—even as a child's shadow cast upon a mountain slope is dilated to the aspect of a giant's.

If we, for our own parts, did enact a Briareus, we might count these poets on the fingers of our hundred hands, after the fashion of the poets of Queen Anne's time, counting their syllables. We do not talk of them as "faultless monsters," however wonderful in the multitude and verity of their gifts: their faults were numerous, too. Many poets of an excellent sweetness, thinking of poetry that, like love,

It was to be all made of fantasy,—

fell poetry-sick, as they might fall love-sick, and knotted associations, far and free enough to girdle the earth withal, into true love-knots of quaintest devices. Many poets affected novelty rather than truth; and many attained to novelty rather by attitude than altitude, whether of thought or word. Worst of all, many were incompetent to Sir Philip Sidney's ordeal—the translation of their verses into prose—and would have perished utterly by that hot ploughshare. Still, the natural healthy eye turns toward the light, and the true calling of criticism remains the distinguishing of beauty. Love and honour to the poets of Elizabeth—honour and love to them all! Honour even to the fellow-workers with Sackville in the "Mirror for Magistrates," to Ferrers, Churchyard and others, who had their hand upon the ore if they did not clasp it! and to Warner, the poet of Albion's England, singing snatches of ballad-pathos, while he worked, for the most part heavily, too, with a bowed back as at a stiff soil—and to Gascoigne, reflecting beauty and light from his "Stele Glass," though his "Fruites of War" are scarcely fruits from Parnassus—and to Daniel, tender and noble, and teaching, in his "Muso-philus," the chivalry of poets, though in his "Civil Wars" somewhat too historical, as Drayton has written of him—and to Drayton, generous in the "Polyolbion" of his poet-blessing on every hill and river through this fair England, and not ineloquent in his Heroical Epistles, though some-

what tame and level in his "Barons' Wars"—and to the two brothers Fletcher, Giles and Phineas, authors of "Christ's Victory" and "The Purple Island," for whom the Muse's kiss followed close upon the mother's, gifting their lips with no vulgar music and their house with that noble kinsman, Fletcher the dramatist! Honour, too, to Davies, who "reasoned in verse" with a strong mind and strong enunciation, though he wrote one poem on the Soul and another on Dancing, and concentrated the diverging rays of intellect and folly in his sonnets on the reigning Astræa—and to Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, who had deep thoughts enough to accomplish ten poets of these degenerate days, though because of some obscurity in their expression you would find some twenty critics "full of oaths" by the Pyramids, that they all meant nought—and to Chamberlayne, picturesque, imaginative, earnest (by no means dramatic) in his poetic romance of "Pharonnida," though accumulative to excess of figures, and pedantic in such verbal learning as "entheon charms," the "catagraph" of a picture, the "exagitations and congestions of elements," *et sic omnia!*—to Chalkhill, wrapt, even bound, "in soft Lydian airs," till himself, as well as his Clearchus and Thealma, fall asleep in involutions of harmony—and to Browne, something languid in his "Britannia's Pastorals," by sitting in the sun with Guarini and Marini, and "perplex in the extreme" by a thousand images and sounds of beauty calling him across the dewy fields—and to Wither, author of the "Shepherd's Hunting," and how much else? Wither, who wrote of poetry like a poet, and in return has been dishonoured and misprised by some of his own kind—a true sincere poet of blessed oracles. Honour, love and praise to him and all! May pardon come to us from the unnamed.

Honour also to the translators of poems—to such as Chapman and Sylvester—great hearts, interpreters of great hearts and afterwards

worthily thanked by the Miltons, and Popes, and Keatses, for their gift of greatness to the language of their England.

Honour to the satirists! to Marston, who struck boldly and coarsely at an offence from the same level with the offender—to Hall, preserving his own elevation, and flashing downwardly those thick lightnings in which we smell the sulphur—and to Donne, whose instinct to beauty overcame the resolution of his satiric humour.

Honour, again, to the singers of brief poems, to the lyrists and sonnet-eers! O Shakespeare, let thy name rest gently among them, perfuming the place. We "swear" that these sonnets and songs do verily breathe, "not of themselves, but *thee*;" and we recognise and bless them as short sighs from thy large poetic heart, burdened with diviner inspiration! O rare Ben Jonson, let us have thy songs, rounded each with a spherical thought, and the lyrics from thy masques alive with learned fantasy, and thine epigrams keen and quaint, and thy noble epitaphs, under which the dead seem stirring! Fletcher, thou shalt be with us—prophet of "Comus" and "Penseroso"! giddy with inhalation from the fount of the beautiful, speaking out wildly thought upon thought, measure upon measure, as the bird sings, because his own voice is lovely to him. Sidney, true knight and fantastic poet, whose soul did too curiously inquire the fashion of the beautiful—the fashion rather than the secret,—but left us in one line the completest "Ars Poetica" extant,—

Foole, sayde my Muse to mee, looke in
 thine heart, and write,—

thy name be famous in all England and Arcadia! And Raleigh, tender and strong, of voice sweet enough to answer that "Passionate Shepherd," yet trumpet-shrill to speak the "Soul's errand" thrilling the depths of our own! having honour and suffering as became a poet, from the foot of the Lady of England light upon his cloak, to the cloak of his executioner wrapping redly his

breathless corpse. Marlowe,—we must not forget his "Shepherd" in his tragedies: and "Come live with me" sounds passionately still through the dead cold centuries. And Drummond, the overpraised and underpraised,—a passive poet, if we may use the phraseology—who was not careful to achieve greatness, but whose natural pulses beat music, and with whom the consciousness of life was the sentiment of beauty. And Lyly, shriven from the sins of his "Euphues," with a quaint grace in his songs; and Donne, who takes his place naturally in this new class, having a dumb angel, and knowing more noble poetry than he articulates. Herrick, the Ariel of poets, sucking "where the bee sucks" from the rose-heart of nature, and reproducing the fragrance idealised; and Carew, using all such fragrance as a courtly essence, with less of self-abandonment and more of artificial application; and Herbert, with his face as the face of a spirit, dimly bright; and fantastic Quarles, in rude and graphic gesticulation, expounding verity and glory; and Breton, and Turberville, and Lodge, and Hall (not the satirist), and all the hundred swans, nameless or too numerous to be named, of that Cayster of the rolling time.

Then, high in the miraculous climax, come the dramatists—from whose sinews was knit the overcoming strength of our literature over all the nations of the world. "The drama is the executive of literature," said De Staël: and the Greek's "action, action, action," we shall not miss in our drama. Honour to the dramatists, as honour from them!

We must take a few steps backward for position's sake, and then be satisfied with a rapid glance at the Drama. From the days of Norman William, the representations called Mysteries and Moralities had come and gone without a visible poet; and Skelton appears before us almost the first English claimant of a dramatic reputation, with the authorship of the interludes of "Magnificence"

and the "Nigromansir." The latter is chiefly famous for Warton's affirmation of having held it in his hands, giving courteous occasion to Ritson's denial of its existence: and our own palms having never been crossed by the silver of either, we cannot prophesy on the degree of individual honour involved in the literary claim. Bale, one of the eighth Henry's bishops, was an active composer of Moralities; and John Heywood, his royal jester and "author of that very merry interlude" called "The Four P's," united in his merriment that caustic sense with that lively ease, which have not been too common since in his accomplished dramatic posterity. Yet those who in the bewilderment of their admirations (or senses) attribute to John Heywood the "Pinner of Wakefield," are more obviously—we are sorely tempted to add more ridiculously—wrong, than those who attribute it to Shakespeare. The Canon of Windsor's "Ralph Royster Doyster," and the Bishop of Bath and Wells's "Gammer Gurton," followed each other close into light, the earliest modern comedies, by the force of the *âme ecclésiastique*. A little after came Ferrys, memorialised by Puttenham as "the principal man of his profession" (of poetry), and "of no lesse myrthe and felicity than John Heywood, but of much more skille and magnificence in his meter." But seeing that even Oblivion forgot Ferrys, leaving his name and Puttenham's praise when she defaced his works, and seeing, too, the broad farcedom of the earlier, however episcopal, writers, we find ourselves in an unwilling posture of recognition before Edwards, as the first extant regular dramatist of England. It is a pitiful beginning. "The Four P's" would be a more welcome A to us. They express more power with their inarticulate roughness than does this "Damon and Pythias," with its rhymed, loitering frigidity, or even than this "Palamon and Arcite," in which the sound of the hunting horn cast into ecstasy the too gracious

soul of Queen Elizabeth. But Sir John Davies's divine Astræa was, at that grey dawn of her day, ignorant of greater poets; and we ("happy in this") go on toward them. After Edwards, behold Sackville with that "Gorboduc" we have named, the first blank verse tragedy we can name, praised by Sidney for its exemplary preservation of the unities and for "climbing to the height of Seneca his stile,"—tight-fitting praise, considering that the composition is high enough to account for its snow, and cold enough to emulate the Roman's. And after Sackville, behold the first dramatic geniuses, in juxtaposition with the first dramatists—Peele, and Kyd, mad as his own Hieronimo (we will grant it to such critics as are too utterly in their senses), only—

When he is mad,
Then, methinks, he is a brave fellow!
and then, methinks, and by such madness, the possibility of a Shakespeare was revealed. Kyd's blank verse is probably the first breaking of the true soil; and certainly far better and more dramatic than Marlowe's is—crowned poet as the latter stands before us—poet of the English "Faustus," which we will not talk of against the German, nor set up its grand, luxurious, melancholy devil against Goethe's subtle, biting, Voltairish devil, each being devil after its kind,—the poet of the Jew which Shakespeare drew (not, yet a true Jew "with a berde,"—and the poet of the first historical drama,—since the "Gorboduc" scarcely can be called one. Marlowe was more essentially a poet than a dramatist; and if the remark appear self-evident and universally applicable, we will take its reverse in Kyd, who was more essentially, with all his dramatic faults, a dramatist than a poet. Passing from the sound of the elemental monotonies of the rhythm of Marlowe, we cannot pause before Nash and Greene to distinguish their characteristics. It is enough to name these names of gifted dramatists, who lived, or at

least wrote, rather before Shakespeare than with him, and helped to make him credible. Through them, like a lens, we behold his light. Of them we conjecture—these are the blind elements working before the earthquake,—before the great "Shakespeare," as Greene said when he was cross. And we may say when we are fanciful, these are the experiments of Nature, made in her solution of the problem of how much deathless poetry will agree with how much mortal clay—these are the potsherd vessels half filled, and failing at last,—until up to the edge of one, the liquid inspiration rose and bubbled in hot beads to quench the thirsty lips of the world.

It is hard to speak of Shakespeare; these measures of the statures of common poets fall from our hands when we seek to measure him: it is harder to praise him. Like the tall plane-tree which Xerxes found standing in the midst of an open country, and honoured inappropriately with his "barbaric pomp," with bracelets and chains and rings suspended on its branches, so has it been with Shakespeare. A thousand critics have commended him with praises as unsuitable as a gold ring to a plane-tree. A thousand hearts have gone out to him, carrying necklaces. Some have discovered that he individualised, and some that he generalised, and some that he subtilised—almost *trans*-transcendently. Some would have it that he was a wild genius, sowing wild oats and stealing deer to the end, with no more judgment forsooth than "youth the hare;" and some, that his very pulses beat by that critical law of art in which he was blameless:—some, that all his study was in his horn-book, and not much of that; and some, that he was as learned a polyglot as ever had been dull but for Babel:—some, that his own ideal burned steadfastly within his own fixed contemplations, unstirred by breath from without; and some, that he wrote for the gold on his palm and the "rank popular breath" in his nos-

trils, apart from consciousness of greatness and desire of remembrance. If the opinions prove nothing, their contradictions prove the exaltation of the object; their contradictions are praise. For men differ about things above their reach, not within it;—about the mountains in the moon, not Primrose Hill: and more than seven cities of men have differed in their talk about Homer also. Homer, also, was convicted of indiscreet nodding; and Homer, also, had no manner of judgment, and the "Ars Poetica" people could not abide his bad taste. And we find another analogy. We, who have no leaning to the popular cant of Romanticism and Classicism, and believe the old Greek BEAUTY to be both new and old, and as alive and not more grey in Webster's "Duchess of Malfy" than in Æschylus's "Eumenides," do reverence this Homer and this Shakespeare as the colossal borderers of the two intellectual departments of the world's age,—do behold from their feet the antique and modern literatures sweep outwardly away, and conclude, that whereas the Greek bore in his depth the seed and prophecy of all the Hellenic and Roman poets, so did Shakespeare, "whose seed was in himself" also, those of a later generation.

For the rest we must speak briefly of Shakespeare, and very weakly too, except for love. That he was a great natural genius nobody, we believe, has doubted—the fact has passed with the cheer of mankind; but that he was a great artist the majority has doubted. Yet Nature and Art cannot be reasoned apart into antagonistic principles. Nature is God's art—the accomplishment of a spiritual significance hidden in a sensible symbol. Poetic art (man's) looks past the symbol with a divine guess and reach of soul into the mystery of the significance,—disclosing from the analysis of the visible things the synthesis or unity of the ideal,—and expounds like symbol and like significance out of the infinite of God's

doing into the finite of man's comprehending. Art lives by Nature, and not the bare mimetic life generally attributed to Art: she does not imitate, she expounds. *Interpres nature*—is the poet-artist; and the poet wisest in nature is the most artistic poet: and thus our Shakespeare passes to the presidency unquestioned, as the greatest artist in the world. We believe in his judgment as in his genius. We believe in his learning, both of books and men, and hills and valleys: in his grammars and dictionaries we do not believe. In his philosophy of language we believe absolutely: in his Babel-learning, not at all. We believe reverently in the miracle of his variety; and it is observable that we become aware of it less by the numerousness of his persons and their positions, than by the *depth* of the least of either,—by the sense of visibility beyond what we see, as in nature. Our creed goes on to declare him most passionate and most rational—of an emotion which casts us into thought, of a reason which leaves us open to emotion: most grave and most gay—while we scarcely can guess that the man Shakespeare is grave or gay, because he interposes between ourselves and his personality the whole breadth and length of his ideality. His associative faculty—the wit's faculty besides the poet's,—for him who was both wit and poet, shed sparks like an electric wire. He was wise in the world, having studied it in his heart; what is called "the knowledge of the world" being just the knowledge of one heart, and certain exterior symbols. What else? What otherwise could he, the young transgressor of Sir Thomas Lucy's fences, new from Stratford and the Avon, close in theatric London, have seen or touched or handled of the Hamlets and Lears and Othellos, that he should draw them? "How can I take portraits," said Marmon tel, in a similar inexperience, "before I have beheld faces?" Voltaire embraced him, in reply. Well ap-

plauded, Voltaire! It was a *mot* for Marmontel's utterance, and Voltaire's praise—for Marmontel, not for Shakespeare. Every being is his own centre to the universe, and in himself must one foot of the compasses be fixed to attain to any measurement: nay, every being is his own mirror to the universe. Shakespeare wrote from within—the beautiful; and we recognise from within—the true. He is universal, because he is individual. And without any prejudice of admiration, we may go on to account his faults to be the proofs of his power; the cloud of dust cast up by the multitude of the chariots. The activity of his associative faculty is occasionally morbid: in the abundance of his winged thoughts, the locust flies with the bee, and the ground is dark with the shadow of them. Take faults, take excellences, it is impossible to characterise this Shakespeare by an epithet: have we heard the remark before, that it should sound so obvious? We say of Corneille, the noble; of Racine, the tender; of Æschylus, the terrible; of Sophocles, the perfect; but not one of these words, not one appropriately descriptive epithet, can we attach to Shakespeare without a conscious recoil. Shakespeare! the name is the description.

He is the most wonderful artist in blank verse of all in England, and almost the earliest. We do not say that he first broke the enchainment of monotony, of which the Sackvilles and the Marlowes left us complaining; because the versification of "Hieronimo" ran at its own strong will, and the "Pinner of Wakefield" may have preceded his first plays. We do not even say, what we might, that his hand first proved the compass and infinite modulation of the new instrument; but we do say, that it never answered another hand as it answered his. We do say, this fingering was never learned of himself by another. From Massinger's more resonant majesty, from even Fletcher's more numerous and artful cadences, we turn back to his artlessness of art, to

his singular and supreme estate as a versificator. Often when he is at the sweetest, his words are poor monosyllables, his pauses frequent to brokenness, and the structure of the several lines less varied than was taught after Fletcher's masterdom; but the whole results in an ineffable charming of the ear which we acquiesce in without seeking its cause, a happy mystery of music.

This is little for Shakespeare; yet so much for the place, that we are forced into brevities for our observations which succeed. We chronicle only the names of Chapman, Dekker, Webster, Tourneur, Randolph, Middleton, and Thomas Heywood, although great names, and worthy, it is not too much to add, of Shakespeare's brotherhood. Many besides lean from our memory to the paper, but we put them away reverently. It was the age of the dramatists—the age of strong passionate men, scattering on every side their good and evil oracles of vehement humanity, and extenuating no thought in its word; and in that age "to write like a man" was a deed accomplished by many besides him of whom it was spoken, Jonson's "son Cartwright."

At Jonson's name we stop perforce, and do salutation in the dust to the impress of that "learned sock." He was a learned man, as everybody knows; and, as everybody does not believe, not the worse for his learning. His material, brought laboriously from East and West, is wrapped in a flame of his own. If the elasticity and abandonment of Shakespeare and of certain of Shakespeare's brothers are not found in his writings, the reason of the defects need not be sought out in his readings. His genius, high and verdant as it drew, yet belonged to the hard woods: it was lance-wood rather than bow-wood—a genius rather noble than graceful—eloquent, with a certain severity and emphasis of enunciation. It would have been the same if he, too, had known "little Latin and lesse Greek."

There was a dash of the rhetorical in his dramatic. Not that we deny him empire over the passions: his heart had rhetoric as well as his understanding, and he wrote us a "Sad Shepherd," as well as a "Catiline." His versification heaves heavily with thought. For his comic powers, let "Volpone" and "The Alchemist" attest them with that unextinguishable laughter which is the laughter of gods or poets still more than of the wits' coffee-house. Was it "done at the Mermaid," was it ever fancied there that "rare Ben Jonson" should be called a pedantic poet? Nay, but only a scholastic one.

And Beaumont and Fletcher, the Castor and Pollux of this starry poetic sphere (*lucida sidera*), our silence shall not cover them; nor will we put asunder, in our speech, the names which friendship and poetry joined together, nor distinguish, by a laboured analysis, the vivacity of one from the solidity of the other; seeing that men who, according to tradition, lived in one house, and wore one cloak, and wrote on one page, may well, by the sanctity of that one grave they have also in common, maintain for ever beyond it the unity they coveted. The characteristics of these writers stand out in a softened light from the deep tragic background of the times. We may liken them to Shakespeare in one mood of his mind, because there are few classes of beauty the type or likeness of which is not discoverable in Shakespeare. From the rest they stand out contrastingly, as the Apollo of the later Greek sculpture-school,—too graceful for divinity and too vivacious for marble,—placed in a company of the antiquer statues with their grand blind look of the almightiness of repose. We cannot say of these poets, as of the rest, "they write all like men;" we cannot think they write like women either: perhaps they write a little like centaurs. We are of opinion in any way, that the grace is more obvious than the strength; and there

may be something centauresque and of twofold nature in their rushing mutabilities, and changes on passion and weakness. Clearest of all is that they wrote like poets, and in a versification most surpassingly musical though liberal, as if music served them for love's sake, unbound! They had an excellent genius, but not a strong enough invention to include judgment; judgment being the consistency of invention, and consistency always, whether in morals or literature, depending upon strength. We do not, in fact, find in them any perfect and covenanted whole—we do not find it in character, or in plot, or in composition; and lamenting the defect on many grounds, we do so on this chief one, that their good is just good, their evil just evil, unredeemed into good like Shakespeare's and Nature's evil by unity of design, but lying apart, a willingly chosen, through and through evil—and "by this time it stinketh." If other results are less lamentable, they are no less fatal. The mirror which these poets held up to us is vexed with a thousand cracks, and everything visible is in fragments. Their conceptions all tremble on a peradventure—"peradventure they shall do well;" there is no royal absolute will that they should do well: the poets are less kings than workmen. And being workmen they are weak—the moulds fall from their hands—are clutched with a spasm or fall with a faintness. After which querulousness, we shall leave the question as to whether their tragic or comic powers be put to more exquisite use,—not for solution, nor for doubt (since we hold fast an opinion), but for praise the most rarely appropriate or possible.

One passing word of Ford, the pathetic—for he may wear on his sleeve the epithet of Euripides, and no daw peck there. Most tender is he, yet not to feebleness—most mournful, yet not to languor; yet we like to hear the war-horse leaps of Dekker on the same tragic ground with him, producing at once con-

trast and completeness. Ungrateful thought! the "Witch of Edmonton" bewitched us to it. Ford can fill the ear and soul singly with the trumpet-note of his pathos; and in its pauses you shall hear the murmuring voices of nature,—such a nightingale, for instance, as never sang on a common night. Then that death scene in the "Broken Heart!" who has equalled *that*? It is single in the drama,—the tragic of tragedy, and the sublime of grief. A word, too, of Massinger, who writes all like a giant—a dry-eyed giant. He is too ostentatiously strong for flexibility, and too heavy for rapidity, and monotonous through his perpetual final trochee; his gesture and enunciation are slow and majestic. And another word of Shirley, an inferior writer, though touched, to our fancy, with something of a finer ray, and closing, in worthy purple, the procession of the Elizabethan men. Shirley is the last dramatist. *Valeat et plaudite, O posteri.*

Standing in his traces, and looking backward and before, we become aware of the distinct demarcations of five eras of English poetry: the first, the Chaucerian, although we might call it *Chaucer*; the second, the Elizabethan; the third, which culminates in Cowley; the fourth, in Dryden and the French school; the fifth, the return to nature in Cowper and his successors of our day. These five rings mark the age of the fair and stingsless serpent we are impelled, like the ancient mariner, to bless—but not "unaware." "*Ah benedicite!*" we bless her so, out of our Chaucer's rubric, softly, but with a plaintiveness of pleasure. For when the last echo of the Elizabethan harmonies had died away with Shirley's footsteps, in the twilight of that golden day; when Habington and Lovelace, and every last bird before nightfall was dumb, and Crashaw's fine rapture, holy as a summer sense of silence, left us to the stars—the first voices startling the thinker from his reverting thoughts, are verily of another spirit. The voices are elo-

quent enough, thoughtful enough, fanciful enough; but something is defective. Can any one suffer, as an experimental reader, the transition between the second and third periods, without feeling that something is defective? What is so? And who dares to guess that it may be *INSPIRATION*?

"Poetry is of too spiritual a nature," Mr. Campbell has observed, "to admit of its authors being exactly grouped by a Linnæan system of classification." Nevertheless, from those subtle influences which poets render and receive, and from other causes less obvious but no less operative, it has resulted even to ourselves in this slight survey of the poets of our country, that the signs used by us simply as signs of historical demarcation have naturally fallen or risen into signs of poetical classification. The five eras we spoke of just now, have indeed each a characteristic as clear in poetry as in chronology; and a deeper gulf than an *Anno Domini* yawns betwixt an Elizabethan man and a man of that third era upon which we are entering. The change of the poetical characteristic was not, indeed, without gradation. The hands of the clock had been moving silently for a whole hour before the new one struck; and even in Davies, even in Drayton, we felt the cold foreshadow of a change. The word "sweetness," which presses into our sentences against the will of our rhetoric whenever we speak of Shakespeare ("sweetest Shakespeare") or his kin, we lose the taste of in the later waters; they are brackish with another age.

In what did the change consist? Practically and partially in the idol-worship of *rhyme*. Among the elder poets, the rhyme was only a felicitous adjunct, a musical accompaniment, the tinkling of a cymbal through the choral harmonies. You heard it across the changes of the pause, as an undertone of the chant, marking the time with an audible indistinctness, and catching occasionally and

reflecting the full light of the emphasis of the sense in mutual elucidation. But the new practice endeavoured to identify in all possible cases the rhyme and what may be called the sentimental emphasis; securing the latter to the tenth rhyming syllable, and so dishonouring the emphasis of the sentiment into the base use of the marking of the time. And not only by this unnatural provision did the emphasis minister to the rhyme, but the pause did it also. "Away with all pauses,"—said the reformers,—“except the legitimate pause at the tenth rhyming syllable. O rhyme, live for ever! Rhyme alone take the incense from our altars,—tinkling cymbal alone be our music!”—And so arose, in dread insignificance, the Heart-and-impart men.

Moreover, the corruption of the versification was but a type of the change in the poetry itself, and sufficiently expressive. The accession to the throne of the poets, of the *wits* in the new current sense of the term, or of the *beaux esprits*—a term to be used the more readily because descriptive of the actual pestilential influence of French literature—was accompanied by the substitution of elegant thoughts for poetic conceptions ("elegant," alas! beginning to be the critical pass-word), of adroit illustrations for beautiful images, of ingenuity for genius. Yet this third era is only the preparation for the fourth consummating one—the hesitation before the crime: we smell the blood through it in the bath-room. And our fancy grows hysterical, like poor Octavia, while the dismal extent of the "quantum mutatus" develops itself in detail.

"Waller's sweetness!" it is a needy antithesis to Denham's strength—and, if anything beside, a sweetness as far removed from that which we have lately recognised, as the saccharine of the palate from the melodious of the ear. Will Saccharissa frown at our comparison from the high sphere of his verse? or will she, a happy "lady who can sleep when she

pleases," please to oversleep our offence? It is certain that we but walk in her footsteps in our disdain of her poet, even if we disdain him—and most seriously we disown any such partaking of her "crueltie." Escaping from the first astonishment of an unhappy transition, and from what is still more vexing, those "base, common, and popular" critical voices, which, in and out of various "arts of poetry," have been pleased to fix upon this same transitional epoch as the genesis of excellence to our language and versification, we do not, we hope it of ourselves, undervalue Waller. There is a certain grace "beyond the reach of art," or rather beyond the destructive reach of his ideas of art, to which, we opine, if he had not been a courtier and a renegade, the Lady Dorothea might have bent her courtly head unabashed, even as the Penshurst beeches did. We gladly acknowledge in him, as in Denham and other poets of the transition, an occasional remorseful recurrence by half lines and whole lines, or even a few lines together, to the poetic Past. We will do anything but agree with Mr. Hallam, who, in his excellent and learned work on the Literature of Europe, has passed some singular judgments upon the poets, and none more startling than his comparison of Waller to Milton, on the ground of the sustenance of power. The crying truth is louder than Mr. Hallam, and cries, in spite of Fame, with whom poor Waller was an *enfant trouvé*, an heir by chance, rather than merit,—that he is feeble poetically quite as surely as morally and politically, and that, so far from being an equal and sustained poet, he has not strength for unity even in his images, nor for continuity in his thoughts, nor for adequacy in his expression, nor for harmony in his versification. This is at least our strong and sustained impression of Edmund Waller.

With a less natural gift of poetry than Waller, Denham has not only more strength of purpose and lan-

guage (an easy superiority), but some strength in the abstract: he puts forth rather a sinewy hand to the new structure of English versification. It is true, indeed, that in his only poem which survives to any competent popularity—his "Cooper's Hill"—we may find him again and again, by an instinct to a better principle, receding to the old habit of the medial pause, instead of the would-be sufficiency of the final one. But, generally, he is true to his modern sect of the Pharisees; and he helps their prosperity otherwise by adopting that Pharisaic fashion of setting forth, vaingloriously, a little virtue of thought and poetry in pointed and antithetic expression, which all the wits delighted in, from himself, a chief originator, to Pope, the perfecter. The famous lines, inheriting by entail a thousand critical admirations—

Strong without rage, without o'erflowing
full,

and, as Sydney Smith might put in, "a great many other things without a great many other things," contain the germ and prophecy of the whole Queen Anne's generation. For the rest, we will be brief in our melancholy, and say no more of Denham than that he was a Dryden *in small*.

The genius of the new school was its anomaly, even Abraham Cowley. We have said nothing of "the metaphysical poets" because we disclaim the classification, and believe with Mr. Leigh Hunt, that every poet, inasmuch as he is a poet, is a metaphysician. In taking note, therefore, of this Cowley, who stands on the very vibratory soil of the transition, and stretches his faltering and protesting hands on either side to the old and to the new, let no one brand him for "metaphysics." He was a true poet, both by natural constitution and cultivation, but without the poet's heart. His admirers have compared him to Pindar; and, taking Pindar out of his rapture, they may do so still: he was a Pindar writing by *mélîer* rather than by *verve*. In rapidity and subtlety of the

associative faculty, which, however, with him, moved circularly rather than onward, he was sufficiently Pindaric: but, as it is a fault in the Greek lyrist to leave his buoyancy to the tumultuous rush of his associations too unmisgivingly and entirely for the right reverence of Unity in Beauty,—so is it the crime of the English poet to commit coldly what the other permitted passively, and with a conscious volition, quick yet calm, calm when quickest, to command from the ends of the universe the associations of material sciences and spiritual philosophies. Quickness of the associative or suggestive faculty is common, we have had occasion to observe, to the wit (in the modern sense) and the poet; its application only, being of a reverse difference. Cowley confounded the application, and became a witty poet. The Elizabethan writers were inclined to a too curious illuminating of thought by imagery. Cowley was coarsely curious: he went to the shambles for his chambers of imagery, and very often through the mud. All which faults appear to us attributable to his coldness of temperament, and his defectiveness in the instinct towards Beauty; to having the intellect only of a great poet, not the sensibility. His "Davideis," our first epic in point of time, has fine things in it. His translations, or rather paraphrases, of Anacreon are absolutely the most perfect of any English composition of their order. His other poems contain profuse material, in image and reflection, for the accomplishment of three poets, each greater than himself. He approached the beautiful and the true as closely as mere Fancy could; but that very same Fancy, unfixed by feeling, too often, in the next breath, approximated him to the hideous and the false. Noble thoughts are in Cowley—we say noble, and we might say sublime; but, while we speak, he falls below the first praise. Yet his influence was for good rather than for evil, by inciting to a struggle backward, a delay in the revolution-

any movement : and this although a wide gulf yawned between him and the former age, and his heart's impulse was not strong enough to cast him across it. For his actual influence, he lifts us up and casts us down—charms, and goes nigh to disgust us—does all but make us love and weep.

And then came "glorious John," with the whole fourth era in his arms ;—and eloquent above the sons of men, to talk down, thunder down poetry as if it were an exhalation. Do we speak as if he were not a poet ? nay, but we speak of the character of his influences ; nay, but he was a poet—an excellent poet—in marble : and Phidias, with the sculpturesque ideal separated from his working tool, might have carved him. He was a poet without passion, just as Cowley was : but, then, Cowley lived by fancy, and that would have been poor living for John Dryden. Unlike Cowley, too, he had an earnestness which of itself was influential. He was inspired in his understanding and his senses only ; but to the point of disenchanting the world most marvelously. He had a large soul for a man, containing sundry Queen Anne's men, one within another, like quartetto tables ; but it was not a large soul for a poet, and it entertained the universe by potato-patches. He established finally the reign of the literati for the reign of the poets—and the critics clapped their hands. He established finally the despotism of the final emphasis—and no one dared, in affecting criticism, to speak any more at all against a tinkling cymbal. And so, in distinctive succession to poetry and inspiration, began the new system of harmony "as by law established ;" and so he translated Virgil not only into English but into Dryden ; and so he was kind enough to translate Chaucer too, as an example,—made him a much finer speaker, and not, according to our doxy, so good a versifier—and cured the readers of the old "Knight's Tale" of sundry of their tears ; and so he reasoned powerfully in verse—

and threw into verse, besides, the whole force of his strong sensual being ; and so he wrote what has been called from generation to generation, down to the threshold of our days, "the best ode in the English language." To complete which successes, he thrust out nature with a fork ; and for a long time, and in spite of Horace's prophecy, she never came back again. Do we deny our gratitude and his glory to glorious John because we speak thus ? In nowise would we do it. He was a man greatly endowed ; and our language and our literature remain, in certain respects, the greater for his greatness—more practical, more rapid, and with an air of mixed freedom and adroitness which we welcome as an addition to the various powers of either. With regard to his influence—and he was most influential upon POETRY—we have spoken ; and have the whole of the opening era from which to prove.

While we return upon our steps for a breathing moment, and pause before Milton,—the consideration occurs to us that a person of historical ignorance in respect to this divine poet, would hesitate and be at a loss to which era of our poetry to attach him through the internal evidence of his works. He has not the tread of a contemporary of Dryden ; and Rochester's nothingness is a strange accompaniment to the voice of his greatness. Neither can it be quite predicated of him that he walks an Elizabethan man ; there is a certain fine bloom or farina, rather felt than seen, upon the old poems, unrecognised upon his. But the love of his genius leant backward to those olden oracles ; and it is pleasant to think that he was actually born before Shakespeare's death ; that they too looked upwardly to the same daylight and stars ; and that he might have stretched his baby arms ("animosus infans") to the faint hazel eyes of the poet of poets. Let us think in anywise that he drew in some living subtle Shakespearian benediction, providing for greatness.

The Italian poets had "rained influence" on the Elizabethan "field of the cloth of gold;" and from the Italian poets as well as the classical sources and the elder English ones, did Milton accomplish his soul. Yet the poet Milton was not made by what he received; not even by what he loved. High above the current of poetical influences he held his own grand personality; and there never lived poet in any age (unless we assume ignorantly of Homer) more isolated in the contemporaneous world than he. He was not worked upon from out of it, nor did he work outwardly upon it. As Cromwell's secretary and Salmasius's antagonist, he had indeed an audience; but as a poet, a scant one; his music, like the spherical tune, being inaudible because too fine and high. It is almost awful to think of him issuing from the arena of controversy victorious and *blind*,—putting away from his dark brows the bloody laurel, left alone after the heat of the day by those for whom he had combated; and originating in that enforced dark quietude his epic vision for the inward sight of the unborn; so to avenge himself on the world's neglect by exacting from it an eternal future of reminiscence. The circumstances of the production of his great work are worthy in majesty of the poem itself; and the writer is the ideal to us of the majestic personality of a poet. He is the student, the deep thinker, the patriot, the believer, the thorough brave man,—breathing freely for truth and freedom under the leaden weights of his adversities, never reproaching God for his griefs by his despair, working in the chain, praying without ceasing in the serenity of his sightless eyes; and, because the whole visible universe was swept away from betwixt them and the Creator, contemplating more intently the invisible infinite, and shaping all his thoughts to it in grander proportion. O noble Christian poet! Which is hardest? self-renunciation, and the sackcloth and the cave—or grief-

renunciation, and the working on, on, under the stripe? He did what was hardest. He was Agonistes building up, instead of pulling down; and his high religious fortitude gave a character to his works. He stood in the midst of those whom we are forced to consider the corrupt versifiers of his day, an iconoclast of their idol rhyme, and protesting practically against the sequestration of pauses. His lyrical poems, move they ever so softly, step loftily, and with something of an epic air. His sonnets are the first sonnets of a free rhythm—and this although Shakespeare and Spenser were sonneteers. His "Comus," and "Samson," and "Lycidas,"—how are we to praise them? His epic is the second to Homer's, and the first in sublime effects—a sense as of divine benediction flowing through it from end to end. Not that we compare, for a moment, Milton's genius with Homer's; but that Christianity is in the poem besides Milton. If we hazard a remark which is not admiration, it shall be this—that with all his heights and breadths (which we may measure geometrically if we please from the "Davideis" of Cowley)—with all his rapt devotions and exaltations towards the highest of all, we do miss something (we, at least, who are writing, miss something) of what may be called, but rather metaphysically than theologically, *spirituality*. His spiritual personages are vast enough, but not rarefied enough. They are humanities, enlarged, uplifted, transfigured—but no more. In the most spiritual of his spirits there is a conscious, obvious, even ponderous materialism. And hence comes the celestial gunpowder, and hence the clashing with swords, and hence the more continuous evil which we feel better than we describe, the thick atmosphere clouding the heights of the subject. And if anybody should retort, that complaining so we complain of Milton's humanity—we shake our heads. For Shakespeare also was a *man*; and our creed is, that the "Midsummer

Night's Dream" displays more of the fairyhood of fairies than the "Paradise Lost" does of the angelhood of angels. The example may serve the purpose of explaining our objection; both leaving us room for the one remark more—that Ben Jonson and John Milton, the most scholastic of our poets, brought out of their scholarship different gifts to our language: that Jonson brought more Greek, and Milton more Latin; while the influences of the latter and greater poet were at once more slowly and more extensively effectual.

Butler was the contemporary of Milton: we confess a sort of continuous "innocent surprise" in the thought of it, however the craziness of our imagination may be in fault. We have stood by as witnesses while the great poet sanctified the visible earth with the oracle of his blindness; and are startled that a profane voice should be hardy enough to break the echo, and jest in the new consecrated temple. But this is rather a Roundheaded than a longheaded way of adverting to poor Butler; who, for all his gross injustice to the purer religionists, in the course of "flattering the vices and daubing the iniquities" of King Charles's court, does scarcely deserve at our hands either to be treated as a poet or punished for being a contemporary of the poet Milton. Butler's business was the business of descraction, the exact reverse of a poet's; and by the admission of all the world his business is well done. His learning is various and extensive, and his fancy communicates to it its mobility. His wit has a gesture of authority, as if it might, if it pleased, be wisdom. His power over language, "tattered and ragged" like Skelton's, is as wonderful as his power over images. And if nobody can commend the design of his "Hudibras," which is the English counterpart of "Don Quixote,"—a more objectionable servility than an adaptation from a serious composition, in which case that humorous effect would have been increased by the travesty, which

is actually injured and precisely in an inverse ratio, by the burlesque copy of the burlesque,—everybody must admit the force of the execution. When Prior attempted afterwards the same line of composition with his peculiar grace and airiness of diction,—when Swift ground society into jests with a rougher turning of the wheel,—still, then and since, has this Butler stood alone. He is the genius of his class; a natural enemy to poetry under the form of a poet: not a great man, but a powerful man.

We return to the generation of Dryden and to Pope his inheritor—Pope, the perfecter, as we have already taken occasion to call him—who stood in the presence of his father Dryden, before that energetic soul, weary with its long literary work which was not always clean and noble, had uttered its last wisdom or foolishness through the organs of the body. Unfortunately, Pope had his advisers apart from his muses; and their counsel was "be correct." To be correct, therefore, to be great through correctness, was the end of his ambition, an aspiration scarcely more calculated for the production of noble poems than the philosophy of utilitarianism is for that of lofty virtues. Yet correctness seemed a virtue rare in the land; Dr. Johnson having crowned Lord Roscommon over Shakespeare's head, "the only correct writer before Addison." The same critic predicated of Milton, that he could not cut figures upon cherry-stones. Pope glorified correctness, and dedicated himself to cherry-stones from first to last. A cherry-stone was the apple of his eye.

Now we are not about to take up any popular cry against Pope; he has been overpraised and is underpraised; and, in the silence of our poetical experience, ourselves may confess personally to the guiltiness of either extremity. He was not a great poet; he meant to be a correct poet, and he was what he meant to be, according to his construction of the

thing meant : there are few amongst us who fulfil so literally their ambitions. Moreover we will admit to our reader in the confessional, that, however convinced in our innermost opinion of the superiority of Dryden's genius, we have more pleasure in reading Pope than we ever could enjoy or imagine under Pope's master. We incline to believe that Dryden being the greatest poet-power, Pope is the best poet-manual ; and that whatever Dryden has done—we do not say conceived, we do not say suggested, but *done*—Pope has done that thing better. For translations, we hold up Pope's Homer against Dryden's Virgil and the world. Both translations are utterly and equally contrary to the antique, both bad with the same sort of excellence ; but Pope's faults are Dryden's faults, while Dryden's are not Pope's. We say the like of the poems from Chaucer ; we say the like of the philosophic and satirical poems ; the art of reasoning in verse is admirably attained by either poet, but practised with more grace and point by the later one. To be sure, there is the " Alexander's Feast " ode, called, until people half believed what they said, the greatest ode in the language ! But here is, to make the scales even again, the " Eloisa," with tears on it—faulty but tender—of a sensibility which glorious John was not born with a heart for. To be sure, it was not necessary that John Dryden should keep a Bolingbroke to think for him : but to be sure again, it is something to be born with a heart, particularly for a poet. We recognise besides, in Pope, a delicate fineness of tact, of which the precise contrary is unpleasantly obvious in his great master ; Horace Walpole's description of Selwyn, *une bête inspirée*, with a restriction of *bête* to the animal sense, fitting glorious John like his crown. Now there is nothing of this coarseness of the senses about Pope ; the little pale Queen Anne's valetudinarian had a nature fine enough to stand erect upon the point

of a needle like a Schoolman's angel ; and whatever he wrote coarsely, he did not write from inward impulse, but from external conventionality, from a bad social Swift-sympathy. For the rest, he carries out his master's principles into most excellent and delicate perfection : he is rich in his degree. And there is, indeed, something charming even to an enemy's ear in this exquisite balancing of sounds and phrases, these " shining rows " of oppositions and appositions, this glorifying of commonplaces by antithetic processes, this catching, in the rebound, of emphasis upon rhyme and rhyme ; all, in short, of this Indian jugglery and Indian carving upon—cherry-stones ! " and she herself " (that is, poetry)—

And she herself one fair Antithesis.

When Voltaire threw his " *Henriade* " into the fire and Hénault rescued it, " *Souvenez-vous*," said the president to the poet, " that I burnt my lace ruffles for the sake of your epic." It was about as much as the epic was worth. For our own part, we would sacrifice not only our point, but the prosperity of our very fingers, to save from a similar catastrophe these works of Pope ; and this, although the most perfect and original of all of them, " *The Rape of the Lock*," had its fortune in a fire-safe. They are the works of a master. A great poet ? Oh no ! A true poet ?—perhaps not. Yet a man, be it remembered, of such mixed gracefulness and power, that Lady Mary Wortley [Montagu] deigned to coquet with him, and Dennis shook before him in his shoes.

Nature, as we have observed, had been expelled by a fork, under the hand of Pope's progenitors ; and if in him and around him we see no sign of her return, we do not blame Pope for what is, both in spirit and in form, the sin of his school. Still less would we " play at bowles " with Byron, and praise his right use of the right poetry of Art. Our views of Nature and of Art have been suffi-

ciently explained to leave our opinion obvious of the controversy in question, in which, as in a domestic broil, "there were faults on both sides." Let a poet never write the words "tree," "hill," "river," and he may still be true to nature. Most untrue, on the other hand, most narrow, is the poetical sectarianism, and essentially most unpoetical, which stands among the woods and fields announcing with didactic phlegm, "Here only is nature." Nature is where God is. Poetry is where God is. Can you go up or down or around, and not find Him? In the loudest hum of your machinery, in the dunnest volume of your steam, in the foulest street of your city,—there, as surely as in the Brocken pinewoods, and the watery thunders of Niagara,—there, as surely as He is above all, lie Nature and Poetry in full life. Speak, and they will answer! Nature is a large meaning: let us make room for it in the comprehension of our love!—for the coral rock built up by the insect and the marble column erected by the man.

In this age of England, however, pet-named the Augustan, there was no room either for Nature or Art: Art and Nature (for we will not separate their names) were at least maimed and dejected and sickening lay by day—

Quoth she, I grieve to see your leg
Stuck in a hole here, like a peg;

and even so, or like the peg of a top humming drowsily, our poetry stood still. There was an abundance of "correct writers," yes, and of "elegant writers": there was Parnell, for instance, who would be called besides, a pleasing writer by any pleasing critic; and Addison, a proverb for the "virtuousest, discreetest, best" with all the world. Or if, after the Scotch mode of Monkbarns, we call our poets by their possessions, not so wronging their characteristics, there was "The Dispensary," the "Art of Preserving Health," the "Art of Cookery,"—and "Trivia," or the "Fan,"—take

Gay by either of those names! and "Cider," or the "Splendid Shilling"—take Phillips, Milton's imitator, by either of these! and there was Pomfret, not our "choice," the concentrate essence of namby-pambyism; and Prior, a brother spirit of the French Gresset,—a half-brother, of an inferior race, yet to be praised by us for one instinct obvious in him, a blind stretching of the hand to a sweeter order of versification than was current. Of Young we could write much: he was the very genius of antithesis; a genius breaking from "the system," with its broken chain upon his limbs, and frowning darkly through the grey monotony; a grander writer by spasms than by volitions. Blair was of his class, but rougher; a brawny contemplative Orson. And how many of our readers may be unaware of the underground existence of another "Excursion," than the deathless one of our days, and in blank verse, too, and in several cantos; and how nobody will thank us for digging at these fossil remains! It is better to remember Mallet by his touching ballad of "William and Margaret," a word taken from diviner lips to becoming purpose; only we must not be thrown back upon the "Ballads," lest we wish to live with them for ever. Our literature is rich in ballads, a form epitomical of the epic and dramatic, and often vocal when no other music is astir; and to give a particular account of which would take us far across our borders.

As it is, we are across them; we are benighted in our wandering and straitened for room. We glance back vainly to the lights of the later drama, and see Dryden, who had the heart to write rhymed plays after Shakespeare, and but little heart for anything else,—and Congreve, and Lillo, and Southerne, and Rowe, all gifted writers, and Otway, master of tears, who starved in our streets for his last tragedy—a poet most effective in broad touches; rather moving, as it appears to us, by scenes than by words.

Returning to the general poets, we meet, with bent faces toward hill-side Nature, Thomson and Dyer; in writing which names together, we do not depreciate Thomson's, however we may a little exalt Dyer's. We praise neither of these writers for being descriptive poets; but for that faithful transcript of their own impressions, which is a common subject of praise in both: Dyer being more distinct, perhaps, in his images, and Thomson more impressive in his general effect. Both are faulty in their blank verse diction; the latter too florid and verbose, the former (although "Grongar Hill" is simple almost to baldness) too pedantic and *constructive*—far too "saponaceous" and "pomaceous." We offer pastoral salutation also to Shenstone and Hammond; pairing them like Polyphemus's sheep; fain to be courteous if we could: and we could if we were "Phyllida." Surely it is an accomplishment to utter a pretty thought so simply that the world is forced to remember it; and that gift was Shenstone's, and he the most poetical of country gentlemen. May every shrub on the lawn of Leasowes be ever green to his brow! And next, oh most patient reader,—pressed to a conclusion and in a pairing humour, we come to Gray and Akenside together, yes, together! because if Gray had written a philosophic poem he would have written it like the "Pleasures of Imagination," and because Akenside would have written odes like Gray, if he could have commanded a rapture. Gray, studious and sitting in the cold, learnt the secret of a simulated and innocent fire (the Greek fire he might have called it), which burns beautifully to the eye, but never would have harmed M. Hénault's ruffles. Collins had twenty times the lyric genius of Gray; we feel his fire in our cheeks. But Gray, but Akenside—both with a volition towards enthusiasm—have an under-constitution of most scholastic coldness: "Si vis me flere," you must weep; but they only take out their pocket-handkerchiefs. We

confess humbly, before gods and men, that we never read to the end of Akenside's "Pleasures," albeit we have read Plato: some pleasures, say the moralists, are more trying than pains. Let us turn for refreshment to Goldsmith—that amiable genius, upon whose diadem we feel our hands laid ever and anon in familiar love,—to Goldsmith, half emerged from "the system," his forehead touched with the red ray of the morning; a cordial singer. Even Johnson, the ponderous critic of the system, who would hang a dog if he read "Lycidas" twice, who wrote the lives of the poets and left out the poets, even he loved Goldsmith! and Johnson was Dryden's critical bear, a rough bear, and with points of noble beardom. But while he growled the leaves of the greenwood fell; and oh, how sick to faintness grew the poetry of England! Anna Seward, "by'r Lady," was the "muse" of those days, and Mr. Hayley, "the bard," and Hannah More wrote our dramas, and Helen Williams our odes, and Rosa Matilda our elegiacs,—and Blacklock, blind from his birth, our descriptive poems, and Mr. Whalley our "domestic epics," and Darwin our poetical philosophy, and Lady Millar encouraged literature at Bath, with red taffeta and "the vase." But the immortal are threatened vainly. It was the sickness of renewal rather than of death; St. Leon had his fainting hand on the elixir: the new era was alive in Cowper. We do not speak of him as the master of a transition, only as a hinge on which it slowly turned; only as an earnest, tender writer, and true poet enough to be true to himself. Cowper sang in England, and Thomas Warton also,—of a weaker voice but in tune: and Beattie, for whom we have too much love to analyse it, seeing that we drew our childhood's first poetic pleasure from his "Minstrel." And Burns walked in glory on the Scottish mountain's side: and everywhere Dr. Percy's collected ballads were sowing the great hearts of some still living for praise, with

impulses of greatness. It was the revival of poetry, the opening of the fifth era, the putting down of the Dryden dynasty, the breaking of the serf bondage, the wrenching of the iron from the soul. And Nature and Poetry did embrace one another! and all men who were lovers of either and of our beloved England, were enabled to resume the pride of their consciousness, and looking round the world say gently, yet gladly, "Our Poets."

When Mr. Wordsworth gave his first poems to the public, it was not well with poetry in England. The "system" riveted upon the motions of poetry by Dryden and his dynasty had gradually added to the restraint of slavery, its weakness and emasculation. The change from poetry to rhetoric had issued in another change, to the commonplaces of rhetoric. We had no longer to complain of Pope's antithetic glories: there was "a vile antithesis" for those also. The followers were not as the master; and the very facility with which the trick of acoustical mechanics was caught up by the former—admitting of "singing for the million," with ten fingers each for natural endowment, and the ability to count them for requirement,—made wider and more apparent the difference of dignity between the Popes and the Pope Joans. Little by little, by slow and desolate degrees, Thought had perished out of the way of the appointed and most beaten rhythm; and we had the beaten rhythm, without the living footstep—we had the monotony of the military movement, without the heroic impulse—the cross of the Legion of Honour, hung, as it once was, in a paroxysm of converted Bourbonism, at a horse's tail; and the "fork," which expelled Nature, dropped feebly downward, blunted of its point. And oh! to see who sat then in England in the seats of the elders! The Elizabethan men would have gnashed their teeth at such a sight; the Queen Anne's men would have multiplied Dunciads. Of the third George's men

(Ἀχαιῶδες οὐκ ἔτ' Ἀχαιοί), Hayley, too good a scholar to bear to be so bad a poet, was a chief hope; and Darwin, mistaker of the optic nerve for the poetical sense, an inventive genius.

But Cowper had a great name, and Burns a greater; and the *réveil* of Dr. Percy's "Reliques of English Poetry" was echoed presently by the "Scottish Minstrelsy." There was a change, a revival, an awakening, a turning, at least upon the pillow, of some who slept on in mediocrity, as if they felt the daylight on their shut eyelids: there was even a group of noble hearts (Coleridge, the idealist, poet among poets, in their midst), foreseeing the sun. Nature, the long banished, re-dawned, like the morning: Nature, the true mother, cried afar off to her children, "Children, I am here! come to me." It was a hard act to come, and involved the learning and the leaving of much. Conventionalities of phrase and rhythm, conventional dialects set apart for poets, conventional words, attitudes, and manners, consecrated by "wits,"—all such Nessian trappings were to be wrenched off, even to the cuticle into which they had urged their poison. But it was an act not too hard for the doing. There was a visible movement towards Nature; the majority moving of course with reservation, but individuals with decision; some rending downward their garments of pestilent embroidery, and casting themselves at her feet. As the chief of the movement, the Xenophon of the return, we are bound to acknowledge this great Wordsworth, and to admire how, in a bravery bravest of all because born of love, in a passionate unreservedness sprung of genius, and to the actual scandal of the world which stared at the filial familiarity, he threw himself not at the feet of Nature, but straightway and right tenderly upon her bosom. And so, trustfully as child before mother, self-renouncingly as child after sin, absorbed away from the consideration of publics and critics as child at

playhours, with a simplicity startling to the *blasé* critical ear as inventiveness, with an innocent utterance felt by the competent thinker to be wisdom, and with a faithfulness to natural impressions acknowledged since by all to be the highest art,—this William Wordsworth did sing his “Lyrical Ballads” where the “Art of criticism” had been sung before, and “the world would not let them die.”

The voice of nature has a sweetness which few of us, when sufficiently tried, can gainsay; it penetrates our artificial “tastes,” and overcomes us; and our ignorance seldom proves strong, in proportion to our instincts. We recognise, like Ulysses’ dog, with feeble joyous gesture the master’s voice: and the sound is nearly always pleasant to us, however we may want strength to follow after it. But while, at the period we refer to, the recognition and gratulation were true and deep, the old conventionalities and prejudices hung heavily in bondage and repression. The great body of readers would recoil to the Drydenic rhythm, to the Queen Anne’s poetical cant, to anti-Saxonisms whether in Latin or French; or exacted, as a condition of a poet’s faithfulness to nature, such an effervescence of his emotions as had rendered Pope natural in the “Eloisa.” “Let us all forsooth be Eloisa, and so natural,”—the want was an excuse for loving nature; and the opinion went that the daily heartbeat was more obnoxious in poetry than the incidental palpitation. Poor Byron (true miserable genius, soul-blind great poet!) ministered to this singular need, identifying poetry and passion. Poetry ought to be the revelation of the complete man—and Byron’s manhood having no completion nor entirety, consisting on the contrary of a one-sided passionateness, his poems discovered not a heart, but the wound of a heart; not humanity, but disease; not life, but a crisis. It was not so, it was not in the projection of a passionate emotion,

that William Wordsworth committed himself to nature, but in full resolution and determinate purpose. He is scarcely, perhaps, of a passionate temperament, although still less is he cold; rather quiet in his love, as the stockdove, and brooding over it as constantly, and with as soft an inward song lapsing outwardly—serene through deepness—saying himself of his thoughts, that they “do often lie too deep for tears;” which does not mean that their painfulness will not suffer them to be wept for, but that their closeness to the supreme Truth hallows them, like the cheek of an archangel, from tears. Call him the very opposite of Byron, who, with narrower sympathies for the crowd, yet stood nearer to the crowd, because everybody understands passion. Byron was a poet through pain. Wordsworth is a feeling man because he is a thoughtful man; he knows grief itself by a reflex emotion; by sympathy, rather than by suffering. He is eminently and humanly expansive; and, spreading his infinite egotism over all the objects of his contemplation, reiterates the love, life, and poetry of his peculiar being in transcribing and chanting the material universe, and so sinks a broad gulf between his descriptive poetry and that of the Darwinian painter-poet school. Darwin was, as we have intimated, all optic nerve. Wordsworth’s eye is his soul. He does not see that which he does not intellectually discern, and he beholds his own cloud-capped Helvellyn under the same conditions with which he would contemplate a grand spiritual abstraction. In his view of the exterior world—as in a human Spinozism,—mountains and men’s hearts share in a sublime unity of humanity; yet his Spinozism does in nowise affront God, for he is eminently a religious poet, if not, indeed, altogether as generous and capacious in his Christianity as in his poetry; and, being a true Christian poet, he is scarcely least so when he is not writing directly upon the subject of religion; just as we learn

sometimes without looking up, and by the mere colour of the grass, that the sky is cloudless. But what is most remarkable in this great writer is his poetical consistency. There is a wonderful unity in these multi-form poems of one man: they are "bound each to each in natural piety," even as his days are: and why? because they *are* his days—all his days, work days and Sabbath days—his life, in fact, and not the unconnected works of his life, as vulgar men do opine of poetry and do rightly opine of vulgar poems, but the sign, seal, and representation of his life—nay, the actual audible breathing of his inward spirit's life. When Milton said that a poet's life should be a poem, he spoke a high moral truth; if he had added a reversion of the saying, that a poet's poetry should be his life,—he would have spoken a critical truth, not low.

"Foole, saide my Muse to mee, looke in thine heart, and write,"—and not only, we must repeat, at feast times, fast times, or curfew times—not only at times of crisis and emotion, but at all hours of the clock; for that which God thought good enough to write, or permit the writing of, on His book, the heart, is not too common, let us be sure, to write again in the best of our poems. William Wordsworth wrote these common things of nature, and by no means in a phraseology or in a style. He was daring in his commonness as any of your Tamerlanes may be daring when far fetching an alien image from an outermost world; and, notwithstanding the ribald cry of that "*vox populi*" which has, in the criticism of poems, so little the character of divinity, and which loudly and mockingly, at his first utterance, denied the sanctity of his simplicities,—the Nature he was faithful to "betrayed not the heart which loved her," but, finally, justifying herself and him, "*did*"—without the "*Edinburgh Review*."

"Hero-worshippers," as we are, and sitting for all the critical pretence—in right or wrong of which we

speak at all—at the feet of Mr. Wordsworth,—recognising him, as we do, as poet-hero of a movement essential to the better being of poetry, as poet-prophet of utterances greater than those who first listened could comprehend, and of influences most vital and expansive—we are yet honest to confess that certain things in the "*Lyrical Ballads*" which most provoked the ignorant innocent hootings of the mob, do not seem to us all heroic. Love, like ambition, may overvault itself; and Betty Foys of the Lake school (so called) may be as subject to conventionalities as Pope's Lady Bettys. And, perhaps, our great poet might, through the very vehemence and nobleness of his hero and prophet-work for nature, confound, for some blind moment, and by an association easily traced and excused, nature with rusticity, the simple with the bald; and even fall into a vulgar conventionality in the act of spurning a graceful one. If a trace of such confounding may occasionally be perceived in Mr. Wordsworth's earlier poetry, few critics are mad enough, to-day, to catch at the loose straws of the full golden sheaf and deck out withal their own arrogant fronts, in the course of mouthing mocks at the poet. The veriest critic of straw knoweth well, at this hour of the day, that if Mr. Wordsworth was ever over-rustic, it was not through incapacity to be right royal; that of all poets, indeed, who have been kings in England, not one has swept the purple with more majesty than this poet, when it hath pleased him to be majestic. *Vivat rex*.—and here is a new volume of his reign. Let us rejoice, for the sake of literature and the age, in the popularity which is ready for it, and in the singular happiness of a great poet living long enough to rebound from the "fell swoop" of his poetical destiny, survive the ignorance of his public, and convict the prejudices of his reviewers. It is a literal "*poetical justice*," and one rarest of all, that a great poet

should stand in a permitted sovereignty, without doing so, like poor Inez de Castro, by right of death. It is almost wonderful that his country should clap her hands in praise of him, before he has ceased to hear: the applause resembles an anachronism. Is Mr. Wordsworth startled at receiving from his contemporaries what he expected only from posterity?—is he asking himself "Have I done anything wrong?" Probably not: it is at least with his usual air of calm and advised dignity that he addresses his new volume in its "Envoy":

Go single,—yet aspiring to be joined
With thy forerunners, that through many
a year
Have faithfully prepared each other's
way—
Go forth upon a mission best fulfilled
When and wherever, in this changeful
world,
*Power hath been given to please for higher
ends*
Than pleasure only; gladdening to pre-
pare
For wholesome sadness, troubling to
refine,
Calming to raise,

—words of the poet which form a nobler description of the character and uses of his poetry than could be given in any words of a critic.

We do not say that the finest of Mr. Wordsworth's productions are to be found or should be looked for in the present volume; but the volume is worthy of its forerunners, consistent in noble earnestness and serene philosophy, true poet's work,—the hand trembling not a jot for years or weariness,—the full face of the soul turned hopefully and stilly as ever towards the True, and catching across its ridge the idealised sunlight of the Beautiful. And yet if we were recording angel, instead of only recording reviewer, we should drop a tear—another—and end by weeping out that series of sonnets in favour of capital punishments,—moved that a hand which has traced *life-war-rants* so long for the literature of England, should thus sign a mis-

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placed "Benedicite" over the hang-man and his victim. We turn away from them to other sonnets—to forget aught in Mr. Wordsworth's poetry we must turn to his poetry:—and however the greatest poets of our country—the Shakespeares, Spensers, Miltons—worked upon high sonnet-ground, not one opened over it such broad and pouring sluices of various thought, imagery, and emphatic eloquence as he has done.

The tender Palinodia is beyond Petrarch:—

Though I beheld at first with blank sur-
prise
This work, I now have gazed on it so
long,
I see its truth with unreluctant eyes;
O, my beloved! I have done thee wrong,
Conscious of blessedness, but, whence it
springs
Ever too heedless, as I now perceive:
Morn into noon did pass, noon into eve,
And the old day was welcome as the
young,
As welcome and as beautiful—in sooth
More beautiful, as being a thing more
holy;
Thanks to thy virtues, to the eternal
youth
Of all thy goodness, never melancholy;
To thy large heart and humble mind, that
cast

Into one vision, future, present, past!

That "*more beautiful*" is most beautiful: all human love's cunning is in it, besides the full glorifying smile of Christian love.

Last in the volume is the tragedy of "The Borderers," which, having lain for some fifty years "unregarded" among its author's papers,—a singular destiny for these printing days when our very morning-talk seems to fall naturally into pica type,—caused, in its announcement from afar, the most faithful disciples to tremble for the possible failure of their master. Perhaps they trembled with cause. The master, indeed, was a prophet of humanity; but he was wiser in love than terror, in admiration than pity, and rather intensely than actively human; capacious to embrace within himself the whole nature of things and beings, but not going out of himself to embrace anything; a

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poet of one large sufficient soul, but not polypsychical like a dramatist. Therefore his disciples trembled: and we will not say that the tragedy, taken as a whole, does not justify the fear. There is something grand and Greek in the intention which hinges it, showing how crime makes crime in cursed generation, and how black hearts, like whiter ones (Topaze or Ebène), do cry out and struggle for sympathy and brotherhood; granting that black heart (Oswald) may stand something too much on the extreme of evil to represent humanity broadly enough for a drama to turn upon. The action, too, although it does not, as might have been apprehended, lose itself in contemplation, has no unhesitating firm dramatic march—perhaps it “potters” a little, to take a word from Mrs. Butler;—and when all is done we look vainly within us for an impression, the response to the unity of the whole. But, again, when all is done, the work is Mr. Wordsworth's, and the conceptions and utterances living and voiceful in it, bear no rare witness to the master. The old blind man, left to the ordeal of the desert—the daughter in agony hanging upon the murderer for consolation—knock against the heart, and take back answers; and ever and anon there are sweet gushings of such words as this poet only knows, showing how, in a “late remorse of love,” he relapses into pastoral dreams, notwithstanding his new vocation, and within the very sight of the theatric *thymele*:—

A grove of darker and more lofty shade
I never saw. The music of the birds
Drops deadened from a roof so thick with
leaves.

Who can overpass the image of
the old innocent man praying?—

The name of daughter on his lips, he
prays!

With nerves so steady, that the very flies
Sit unmolested on his staff.

But we come hastily to the moral

of our story,—seeing that Mr. Wordsworth's life does present a high moral to his generation, to forget which in his poetry would be an unworthy compliment to the latter. It is advantageous for us all, whether poets or poetasters, or talkers about either, to know what a true poet is, what his work is, and what his patience and successes must be, so as to raise the popular idea of these things, and either strengthen or put down the individual aspiration. “Art,” it was said long ago, “requires the whole man,” and “Nobody,” it was said later, “can be a poet who is anything else;” but the present idea of Art requires the segment of a man, and everybody who is anything at all is a poet in a parenthesis. And our shelves groan with little books over which their readers groan less metaphorically; there is a plague of poems in the land apart from poetry; and many poets who live and are true do not live by their truth, but hold back their full strength from Art because they do not *revere* it fully; and all booksellers cry aloud and do not spare, that poetry will not sell; and certain critics utter melancholy frenzies, that poetry is worn out for ever—as if the morning-star was worn out from heaven, or “the yellow primrose” from the grass; and Mr. Disraeli the younger, like Bildad comforting Job, suggests that we may content ourselves for the future with a rhythmic prose, printed like prose for decency, and supplied, for comfort, with a parish allowance of two or three rhymes to a paragraph. Should there be any whom such a “New Poor Law” would content, we are far from wishing to disturb the virtue of their serenity: let them continue, like the hypochondriac, to be very sure that they have lost their souls, inclusive of their poetic instincts. In the meantime the hopeful and believing will hope,—trust on; and, better still, the Tennysons and the Brownings, and other high-gifted spirits, will work, wait on, until, as Mr. Horne has said—

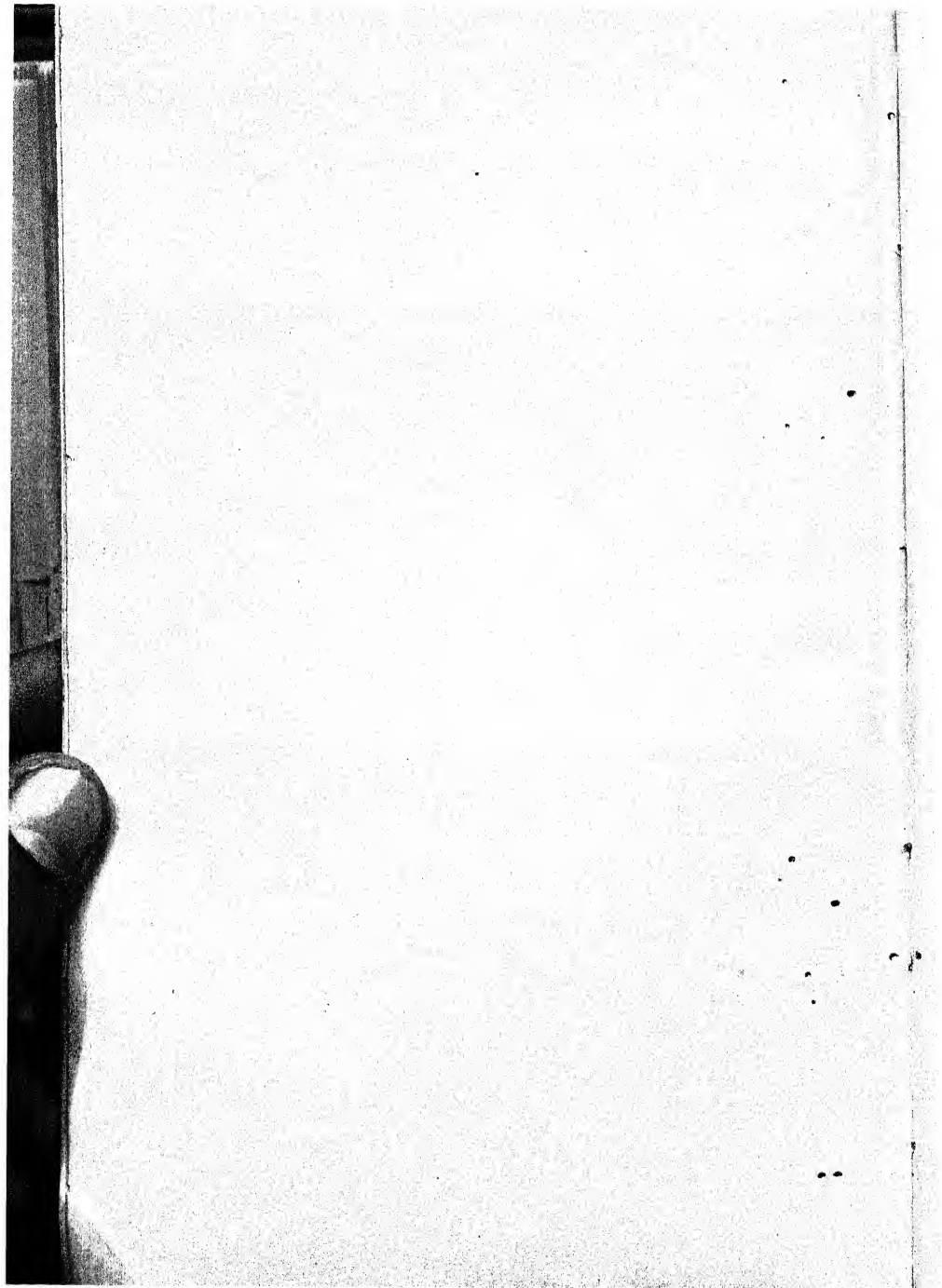
Strong deeds awake
And, clamouring, throng the portals of
the hour.

It is well for them and all to count the cost of this life of a master in poetry, and learn from it what a true poet's crown is worth; to recall both the long life's work for its sake—the work of observation, of meditation, of reaching past models into nature, of reaching past nature unto God; and the early life's loss for its sake—the loss of the popular cheer, of the critical assent, and of the "money in the purse." It is well and full of exultation to remember *now* what a silent, blameless, heroic life of poetic duty this man has lived;—how he never cried rudely against the world because he was excluded for a time from the parsley garlands of its popularity; nor sinned morally because he was sinned against intellectually; nor, being tempted and threatened by paymaster and reviewer, swerved from the righteous-

ness and high aims of his inexorable genius. And it cannot be ill to conclude by enforcing a high example by some noble precepts which, taken from the "Musophilus" of old Daniel, do contain, to our mind, the very code of chivalry for poets:—

Be it that my unseasonable song
Come out of Time, that fault is in the
Time;
And I must not do virtue so much wrong
As love her aught the worse for others'
crime.

And for my part, if only one allow
The care my labouring spirits take in
this,
He is to me a theatre large enow,
And his applause only sufficient is—
All my respect is bent but to his brow;
That is my all, and all I am is his.
And if some worthy spirits be pleased
too,
It shall more comfort breed, but not
more will,
BUT WHAT IF NONE? *It cannot yet undo*
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